

IOWA BIRD LIFE

IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION



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IOWA BIRD LIFE

The Iowa Ornithologists' Union, founded in 1923, encourages interest in the identification, study, and protection of birds in Iowa and seeks to unite those who have these interests in common. Iowa Bird Life and IOU News are quarterly publications of the Union.

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Note from the Editor

Stephen J. Dinsmore

As I begin my third year as editor of *Iowa Bird Life* I would like to take this opportunity to update readers on a few items. I am fortunate to have several regular features (e.g., field reports, Christmas Bird Count summary, etc.) that provide lots of regular material for the journal. In addition, series like book reviews, *Meet an Iowa Birder*, and *Birding Areas of Iowa* provide additional material to help fill the pages of every issue. But I can still use more material! In addition to regular features mentioned above I welcome other submissions that deal with identification issues, historical aspects of birds in Iowa, the results of studies of Iowa's birds, editorials, and other topics that seem appropriate. All articles will be reviewed and published at the discretion of the editor. When submitting articles or photos, please carefully read and follow the Instructions to Authors information that is published on the inside back cover of *Iowa Bird Life*. If you like what you read then please consider submitting your own article – the journal depends on your submissions!

Speaking of articles, I want to thank outgoing journal staff Bob Cecil (*Meet an Iowa Birder* coordinator) and Reid Allen (*Birding Areas of Iowa* coordinator) for their many contributions. Without their years of service, the pages of *Iowa Bird Life* would have been a lot duller! And if there is anyone out there with an interest in organizing these series in the future (I would welcome 2–3 articles in each category per year), please contact me directly.

Lastly, I want to continue to encourage readers to submit their high quality photos for possible publication in *Iowa Bird Life*. Iowa has many superb bird photographers, but surprisingly the number of photo submissions has steadily declined in the last year. I have limited space for color photos, which I generally reserve for the sharpest and most interesting submissions. Photos of rarities are always welcome, but in reality I publish far more photos of common birds. Please email your original, high resolution photos to me (cootjr@iastate.edu) along with a caption with the species, date, and location (please include the county) where the photo was taken. I will not accept hard copies of photos.

Lastly, I want to re-emphasize that I would love to hear your thoughts about the content and appearance of *Iowa Bird Life*. What do you like about the journal? Do you have a suggestion for a new regular feature? Can you suggest any other changes you would like to see?

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Field Reports—Fall 2011

Paul Hertz



Paul Hertz

WEATHER

The 2011 autumn was the driest since 1999 and the 14th driest in 139 years of record keeping. Yet, the largest weather event of the year was the flooding along the Missouri River which began in May and continued through August and into September. This sort of environmental contrast seemed to define the fall of 2011. For example, in early August, the temperature in Fairfield reached 106 degrees, the highest in the state since 2006 when the same temperature was recorded. But by mid-September, people in Mason City were tapping their thermometers trying to get them to rise above a frigid 26 degrees, the coldest temperature for so early in the fall since 1955.

August recorded above average temperatures and below average precipitation. In fact, the southeastern quarter of the state experi-

enced both extremes with the highest temperatures and greatest rain shortfall. Burlington recorded their driest August since 1920.

September opened with a few temperatures still in the 100s, but finished slightly cooler than average, due in part to an early freeze across most of the state on the 15th. The pervasive dry conditions persisted even while the far west continued to deal with the aftermath of Missouri River flooding. The month ended 1.77 inches below normal precipitation.

Like August, October recorded above average temperatures and below average precipitation, but the temperatures fluctuated dramatically. Readings in the teens first came on the 19th, but a few days later on the 25th some locations reported temperatures back in the 80s. Then, four days later on the 29th, the reading in Sheldon sank to 15 degrees. The dry conditions worsened, with only one location, Winterset, reporting above average precipitation. Statewide, the two-month precipitation average was the lowest since 1953 and 5th lowest ever.

November recorded above average temperatures and about average precipitation. The rain, however, missed most of the northwest, and was able to relieve the drought conditions only in the southeast. So, by the end of the month, Sioux Center had experienced their 4th driest November on record, whereas Keokuk had their 3rd wettest. By the end of the year, the northwest and north-central were in severe drought, but the southeastern part of the state was drought free.

BIRDS OF FALL

Habitat Conditions and General Trends

The early fall, with generally mild and dry conditions, produced few noteworthy events. Shorebirds filtered through the state on time, finding favorable conditions in the far southwest where flooding along the Missouri River created transient habitat, at Union Slough NWR where officials deliberately lowered water levels, and along the central and eastern Iowa reservoir systems. However, away from these areas, shorebirds were scarce. Many wetlands, especially in the north and west, dried up completely and several rivers recorded record low levels. Mark Orsag, senior hawk watcher at Hitchcock, remarked that September was slow due to mild temperatures and a lack of strong fronts. Three northern Iowa birders also lamented the poor presence of migrant songbirds, which seemed to bypass dry conditions. Dennis Carter said "the passerine migration seemed very light", and Lee Zieke agreed with "fall migration seemed to start late, and was spotty." Rita Goranson simply put it "this has been the absolute worst fall migration that I have experienced." The mild conditions did enable three warbler species, Louisiana Waterthrush, Prothonotary Warbler, and Worm-eating Warbler, to linger to 2nd-latest dates in September.

By October, unstable weather set in and a few things began to happen. On the 9th, three 3rd-earliest Smith's Longspurs were found in Franklin County. Following heavy thunderstorms at mid-month, Swainson's Hawks peaked as if they knew what was about to happen, and a 2nd-latest Olive-sided Flycatcher in Woodbury County followed along underneath. Within the week, temperatures plummeted to 19 degrees on the 19th, and the next day a 3rd-earliest Long-tailed Duck and 3rd-earliest Pacific Loon were found. The first statewide hard freeze occurred on the 21st, and two days later a record late pewee and a record late Hooded Warbler were found in Warren County. On the 27th, a record-early Glaucous Gull appeared at the Clinton waterfront on the Mississippi River.

In November, both people and birds start thinking winter. In rapid succession, Common Redpolls were found in Humboldt County on the 2nd, Red Crossbills in Kossuth County on the 6th, and a White-winged Crossbill in Ames on the 11th. This is only the 3rd fall since the turn of the century all three have been found. The largest rain event of the month occurred on the 7th, coinciding with the sudden appearance of an enormous flock of dabblers at Spirit Lake conservatively estimated to contain a quarter of a million birds. On the same day in the east, on the Mississippi River, Canvasback alone were estimated to peak at 450,000. And the first Snowy Owl appeared in O'Brien County. In the far west, still making use of the flooded areas near Bartlett in Fremont County on 24 Nov, a handful of American Golden-Plover were 3rd-latest and 23 *Plegadis ibis* were record late.

Unusual Species

In contrast to 2010, it was a quiet year for vagrant species in Iowa. Five Black-necked Stilts in Henry County were the August highlight, representing only the third fall record for this species in Iowa. In late August and early September, Red Knots, formerly casual, were found at three locations, an unusual multiplicity. A single Ferruginous Hawk was spotted in the skies over Hitchcock Nature Center watch tower on October 15. And on the last day of the season, a distant Barrow's Goldeneye was found on the Mississippi River in Iowa waters of Pool 13 in Clinton County.

SPECIES DATA

All CAPS = Casual or Accidental species. * = documented. County names are in italics. Full names of contributors are at the end of the article. Abbreviations used: A = area, L = lake, M = marsh, m.ob. = many observers, NA = nature area, NM = National Monument, NWR = national wildlife refuge, P = park, R = river, RA = recreation area, Res = reservoir, SF = state forest, Sl = slough, SP = state park, USNWR = Union Slough National Wildlife Refuge, WPA = waterfowl production area, WA = wildlife area.

Greater White-fronted Goose: Small groups of less than 25 began appearing in mid-October in *Linn*, *Pottawattamie*, *Story* and *Polk* (BSc, MO, WO, SJD) prior to the first notable flock of 1440 on 2 Nov at DeSoto NWR *Harrison* (USFWS). The most was 6740 also at DeSoto on 9 Nov, and another 3500 were there 29 Nov. At Sandhill L *Woodbury* there were still 300 on 30 Nov (TLu).

Snow Goose: Four early reports of single birds began with 1 on 6 Aug at Sandhill L *Woodbury* (GLV). Large flocks were first noticed 7 Nov with 2900 in flight over Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie*, and 27,000 at the same location 8 Nov (MO). Other noteworthy flocks were 6000 on 19 Nov at Rathbun L *Appanoose* (RLC), 9250 on 20 Nov at Hitchcock, 1340 on 25 Nov in *Marion* (SJD), and at least 2000 on 29 Nov in the skies over Spirit L *Dickinson* (RWT).

Ross's Goose: All: 2 on 9 Oct at Jewell *Hamilton* (SJD), up to 3 in Mason City in late Oct-early Nov (RG, PH), 12 on 19 Nov at Rathbun L *Appanoose* (RLC), 71 on 25 Nov in *Marion* (SJD), and 1 on 30 Nov at Beemer's Pond *Hamilton* (WO).

Cackling Goose: First few: 18 on 2 Oct and another 4 on 4 Oct in *Polk* (SJD, James Huntington), and 100 on 6 Oct at

NIACC *Cerro Gordo* (PH). The most was a smaller peak than usual with only 290 at MidAmerican Ponds *Pottawattamie* 26 Nov (AB).

Canada Goose: The first wild migrants, *B. c. interior*, were 500 on 27 Sep in *Cerro Gordo* (PH).

Mute Swan: Three were in *Johnson* 24 Oct–21 Nov (CRE, JLF, LGR).

Trumpeter Swan: Small groups of 2–8 were reported from 10 counties, and one big group of 108 at Beemer's Pond *Hamilton* on 30 Nov (WO).

Tundra Swan: Numbers began building along the Mississippi R in mid-Nov and peaked at 5380 at Pool 9 *Allamakee* on 21 Nov (RWZ, MHB, DTh, USFWS). There were five reports away from this principal migration stopover—5 on 3 Nov at Pleasant Creek RA *Linn* (JF), 6 on 8 Nov at Coralville L *Johnson* (JF), 6 on 20 Nov at Ada Hayden P *Story* (SJD, POR), 6 on 21 Nov at Rapp P *Page* (KDY), and 2 on 26 Nov at Beemer's Pond *Hamilton* (SJD-photo, POR).

Gadwall: The first large group was 2100 on 3 Oct at Pool 9 *Allamakee* (USFWS). Peaked along the Mississippi R at Pool 13 *Clinton* with 12,850 on 17 Oct. On 7 Nov, ET encountered an enormous flock of dabbling ducks at Spirit L *Dickinson*. His field report description prompted a short discussion and a little mathematics, and we agreed the flock had to have contained at least 250,000 individuals, of which ET estimated at least 50% were Gadwall. That's 125,000 Gadwall, all of which were gone the next day. The last concentration was 2923 on 9 Nov at DeSoto NWR *Harrison* (USFWS).

American Wigeon: An odd lone bird was at Lylah's M *Howard* on 28 Aug (SJD). The most was 5830 on 3 Oct at Pool 9 *Allamakee* (USFWS). The last 12 were at Rathbun L *Appanoose* on 28 Oct (RLC).

American Black Duck: The first was 1 on 21 Oct along the Mississippi R in *Clinton* (KMc), the same place the high count of 150 occurred on 28 Nov (USFWS). Small numbers were also reported in *Allamakee*, *Appanoose*, *Dickinson*, *Hamilton*, and *Jasper*.

Blue-winged Teal: Two high counts were 600 on 14 Sep at *Saylorville Polk* (SJD), and 570 on 10 Oct at Pool 9 *Allamakee* (USFWS). The last was 1 at *Saylorville* on 19 Nov (AB).

Northern Shoveler: Two Aug reports were the first since mid-June—5 on 18 Aug in *Sac* (TMH), and 1 on 28 Aug in *Linn* (BSc). High counts were 1057 on 9 Nov at *DeSoto NWR Harrison* (USFWS), and 3150 on 17 Oct at Pool 13 *Clinton* (USFWS).

Northern Pintail: The first fall occurrences were 8 on 31 Aug at *USNWR (MCK)* and 25 on 3 Sep at *Hartford WA in Warren* (JS). In the west, the first noteworthy group was 450 on 3 Oct in *Fremont* (KDy) followed by 1018 on 19 Oct at *DeSoto NWR Harrison* where they peaked at 8414 on 9 Nov (USFWS). In the east, along the Mississippi R, the first concentration was 4560 on 10 Oct at Pool 13 *Clinton*, the same place the peak of 12,850 occurred on 17 Oct (USFWS).

Green-winged Teal: The first fall birds were 3 in *Jasper* and 8 in *Mahaska* on 20 Aug (JJJ). The first migratory flock was 315 on 25 Sep at *Pinchey Marion* (JG). The eastern peak was 11,470 on 31 Oct at Pool 13 *Clinton*, and the western peak was 6553 on 9 Nov at *DeSoto NWR Harrison* (USFWS). There were still 20 at *Heron Bend Lee* on the last day of the season (JWR).

Canvasback: There were no July, August or September reports. USFWS aerial surveys along the Mississippi R began detecting birds in early Oct which built to an initial concentration of 38,955 at Pool 9 *Allamakee* on 17 Oct. By 7 Nov, this loca-

tion held an estimated 450,000 individuals. Away from the big river, the first migrants were 8 found 24 Oct at *Cedar L Linn* (BSc).

Redhead: The first fall report was 4 on 1 Oct at *Saylorville Polk* (SJD). The peak was 2595 at Pool 9 *Allamakee* on 24 Oct. There were still 590 at *Saylorville* on 3 Nov (AB).

Ring-necked Duck: Adding to scattered singles during summer months, 1 was at *Burr Oak Winneshiek* on 27 Aug (DC). Migrants began gathering in early Nov with 290 at *Saylorville Polk* on 3 Nov (SJD), and the peak along the Mississippi 7 Nov at Pool 9 *Allamakee* when USFWS aerial surveys estimated 12,860.

Greater Scaup: All: 1 on 21 Oct at Pool 13 *Clinton* (KMc), 2 on 23 Oct at *Clear L Cerro Gordo* (PH), 1 on 23 Oct at *L Manawa Pottawattamie* (LJP, BKP), up to 11 at *Saylorville Polk* 27 Oct–4 Nov (AB, SJD), 1 on 13 Nov at *Brushy Creek Webster* (SJD), 3 on 22 Nov at *Clear L* (PH), and 3 on 27 Nov at *MidAmerican Ponds Pottawattamie* (AB).

Lesser Scaup: The larger migrant flocks began appearing in mid-October. 26,105 were estimated at Pool 9 *Allamakee* on 17 Oct (USFWS). Up to 6600 were at *Saylorville Polk* 3 Nov (SJD, AB). The peak was 74,355 on 28 Nov at Pool 9.

Surf Scoter: 39 birds scattered across 13 locations was the most on record. The only adult male reported was 1 on 17 Oct at *Little Wall L Hamilton* (SJD). The first was 1 on 1 Oct at *Rock Creek SP Jasper* (JF) which is a 3rd-earliest date. Some notable groups were 2–7 at *Saylorville* 16–30 Oct (AB, JB, JG, RLC, SJD), 7 at *Pleasant Creek Linn* on 2 Nov (JF), 8 at *Red Rock Marion* on 22 Oct (SJD), and up to 4 at *L Manawa Pottawattamie* 26–27 Nov (AB, LJP, BKP). Also reported from *Cerro Gordo*, *Johnson*, *Story*, and *Webster* (BE, CRE, PH, POR, RG, TNJ, WO).

White-winged Scoter: There were 15 birds found at 8 locations. The first 3 on 29 Oct at Spirit L *Dickinson* (LAS, ET) were the only ones reported for that month, and remained through 11 Nov. Another group of 3 was at Pleasant Creek *Linn* 3–9 Nov (JF, BSc) and 2 were at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* 2–11 Nov (TMH, RG). All others were singles in *Clinton*, *Johnson*, *Polk*, and *Story* (JF, WO, SJD), including a juv female collected at Saylorville and added to the ISU collection (SJD).

Black Scoter: There were 18 birds found at 6 locations: 1 on 22 Oct at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* (RG), up to 3 at Saylorville *Polk* 30 Oct–3 Nov (SJD, RLC) and 1 there 12–20 Nov (SJD, AB, JG), 6 at Coralville L *Johnson* 2, 3 Nov (JF), 1 at Little Wall L *Hamilton* 5 Nov (WO), 4 at Pleasant Creek *Linn* 7, 8 Nov (BSc, JF), and 1 at Big Creek *Polk* 19 Nov (AB).

Long-tailed Duck: All: 1 on 20 Oct at Cedar L *Linn* (JF) was 3rd-earliest, 1 on 24 Oct at Pool 13 *Clinton* (JF), 1 on 3 Nov at Coralville L *Johnson* (JF), 1 on 22 Nov at Saylorville *Polk* (SJD), and 1 on 27 Nov at Coralville L *Johnson* (JF).

Bufflehead: After another summer with no reports, the first was a lone male on 24 Oct at Cedar L *Linn* (BSc). The peak of 6810 at Pool 13 *Clinton* on 28 Nov was late (USFWS). Another 4340 were upstream at Pool 9 *Allamakee* on the same date. Away from the river, concentrations of several hundred were found in late Nov at Saylorville *Polk*, L Rathbun *Appanoose*, L Manawa *Pottawattamie*, and Red Rock *Marion* (AB, BE, BKP, LJP, RLC, SJD).

Common Goldeneye: The first 50 appeared on 25 Oct at Pool 9 *Allamakee* where the peak of 4980 occurred on 29 Nov (USFWS). Away from the Mississippi R, the first was 1 on 19 Nov at L Rathbun *Appanoose* (RLC). In the far west, 195 were counted at

the MidAmerican Ponds *Pottawattamie* 26 Nov (AB).

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE: A male was found 30 Nov at Eagle Pt P, Pool 13 *Clinton* (*JF).

Hooded Merganser: Some high counts were 144 on 19 Nov at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* (PH), and up to 236 on 20–22 Nov at Saylorville *Polk* (AB, BE, SJD), where 58 were still below the dam on 29 Nov (DTh).

Common Merganser: The first 2 were on 8 Nov at Saylorville *Polk* where numbers built to about 100 by 25 Nov (SJD). Another 16 were at L Manawa *Pottawattamie* 22 Nov (LJP, BKP). The high count for mergansers along the Mississippi was 2500 at Pool 13 *Clinton* Nov 28, most of which were probably Commons (USFWS).

Red-breasted Merganser: A female was photographed at Saylorville Res *Polk* on the 2nd-earliest date of 27 Sep (JG-photo). The next arrivals were found nearly a month later on 23 Oct at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* (PH). The high count was 182 on 19 Nov at Saylorville (SJD). Also reported in *Linn*, *Appanoose* and *Pottawattamie* (BSc, RLC, LJP, BKP).

Ruddy Duck: The first large group was 370 on 15 Oct at Marble L *Dickinson* (LAS). Others were 450 on 17 Oct at Saylorville (JG) and 885 there on 3 Nov (SJD), 271 on 29 Oct at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* (PH), and 560 on 26 Nov at L Manawa *Pottawattamie* (LJP, BKP). The highest count was 3725 at Pool 13 *Clinton* on 31 Oct (USFWS).

Northern Bobwhite: Eighteen were flushed 27 Oct in *Madison* while harvesting corn (EA). Otherwise, singles were found in *Mills*, *Taylor* and *Webster* (SJD, JN). DNR August Roadside surveys reported a 36% decline over the pitiful 2010 counts making another new record low for the state.

Gray Partridge: 12 were found in BBA block 204 in *Cherokee* 13 Aug (GLV).

Two broods totaling 18 birds were found in Boone 30 Aug (SJD). From 1–7 were also reported from Grundy, Kossuth, Story and Cerro Gordo (MP, MCK, RG, Michael Meetz, Bruce McKee). DNR Roadside surveys detected an average of 1.2 birds per 30-mile route, about the same as 2010.

Ruffed Grouse: No reports.

Wild Turkey: A very high count was 306 on 29 Nov at DeSoto NWR Harrison (USFWS).

Red-throated Loon: There were 3 reports: a juv was at Coralville L Johnson 27 Oct–7 Nov (JF, LGR-photo, JLF), 1 was at Saylorville Polk 4 Nov (DCH), and another juv was at Red Rock Marion 12–25 Nov (AB, JCe, JF, POR, SJD).

Pacific Loon: A juv was seen at Saylorville 20 Oct, a 3rd-earliest date, and stayed another day, then a second bird appeared in Nov and was last seen on 25 Nov (SJD, AB, DTh, JCe, POR, RIA). In addition, there was 1 on 29 Oct at Clear L Cerro Gordo (PH), and 1 12–15 Nov at Red Rock Marion (AB, JF).

Common Loon: 1 on 16 Sep at L Manawa Pottawattamie may have spent the summer in the area. Otherwise, the first fall migrants were found about a month later on 23 Oct at Clear L Cerro Gordo (PH). These were followed quickly by others and peaked there at 67 on 2 Nov (TMH). Other high counts on 2 Nov were 31 at Brushy Creek Webster and 37 at Little Wall L Hamilton (SJD). Migrants at Saylorville peaked at 72 on 9 Nov (AB), 40 were still at Red Rock Marion 25 Nov (SJD), and smaller numbers could be found through the end of the season.

Pied-billed Grebe: The season's inaugural group was 44 at USNWR Kossuth on 31 Aug (MCK). Two weeks later, numbers peaked at Saylorville with 212 on 14 Sep, and gradually tapered off to 123 by 30 Oct

(SJD). No other location had more than 30, and by the end of Nov there was only 1 left at Saylorville (RLC).

Horned Grebe: The first few were 5 on 29 Sep at Saylorville Polk (DTh, AB) and 3 on 30 Sep at Cedar L Linn (BSc). Pockets of birds were reported from most large bodies of water from mid-Oct to mid-Nov with the exception of Spirit L and Red Rock Res. The high count was 244 at Saylorville 3 Nov (SJD, AB, JG). Last was 1 on 28 Nov on the Mississippi R Scott (WMZ).

Red-necked Grebe: All: 1 on 17 Oct at Little Wall L Hamilton (SJD-photo), 1 on 24 Oct at Spirit L Dickinson (ET), 1 on 19 Nov at Clear L Cerro Gordo (PH), and 1 on 21 Nov at Red Rock Marion (JF).

Eared Grebe: The first was 1 on 29 Sep at Saylorville Polk (DTh) where a total of 3 were found through 22 Nov (AB, SJD). The high count of 22 on 20 Nov at L Manawa Pottawattamie (LJP, BKP) was nearly twice that of all other reports combined. Those other reports were between 1–3 found at Pleasant Creek Linn, Ada Hayden P Story, Spirit L Dickinson, Cedar L Linn, and Red Rock Marion where the last was found on 22 Nov (JF, SJD, WO, LAS, POR).

Western Grebe: The first few fall birds were 1 on 16 Oct at L Manawa Pottawattamie (LJP, BKP) and 2 on 18–29 Oct at Saylorville Polk (SJD, AB, BE, JWR, JG, JB). All others were 1 on 21 Oct at Rock Creek SP Jasper (JF), 1 on 31 Oct–7 Nov at Clear L Cerro Gordo (Barb Roberts), 2 on 12 Nov at L Rathbun Appanoose (TNJ), 1 on 19 Nov at Twelve Mile L Union (CJL), and 1 overhead on 21 Nov in Taylor (CJL).

Double-crested Cormorant: Although more than 1000 nested in the east (Dinsmore 2011), the largest flights were in the far west along the Missouri River. 3000 were estimated on 8 Oct in Fremont (KDy); Hitchcock hawk watchers in Pottawattamie

reported 5000 on 13 Oct (MO), and 3320 were counted in *Woodbury* on 13 Oct (TLu). Along the Mississippi, the most was 1706 at Pool 9 *Allamakee* 3 Oct (USFWS). After mid-Nov there were no flocks numbering more than the 16 seen at *Saylorville Polk* on 26 Nov (RLC).

American White Pelican: The 960 on 7 Aug at *Hawkeye Johnson* (JJD) was the first large group of fall migrants. By the fourth week of Aug, more than 6400 were loafing at *Saylorville Polk* (SJD, AB, BE), and 8150 were at *Red Rock Marion* (JJD, SJD). Other locations with more than 1000 were *Hartford WA Warren* (JS), *USNWR Kossuth* (MCK), and *Woodpecker M Wayne* (RLC). In the west, the biggest movements were later with 5090 on 16 Sep at *Hitchcock Pottawattamie* (MO) and 5000 on 19 Oct at *DeSoto NWR Harrison* (USFWS). Last in the north was 1 likely injured bird at *Clear L Cerro Gordo* 22 Nov (PH), and 90 were still at *Saylorville* 26 Nov (RLC, SJD).

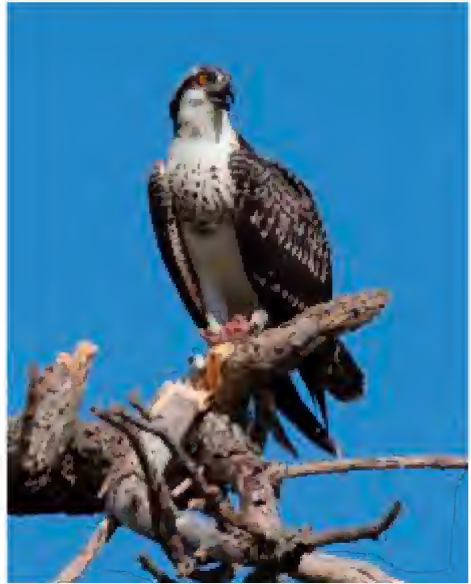
American Bittern: The only report was 1 on 4 Oct at *Bob Pyle M Story* (SJD).

Least Bittern: The only sightings came from *Anderson L Hamilton* (MP, SJD) where breeding was reported in July (Dinsmore 2011).

Great Blue Heron: The most was 548 on 4 Aug in *Fremont* (SJD). Other large groups were 132 on 7 Sep at *USNWR Kossuth* (MCK), 61 on 27 Aug in *Woodbury* (GLV), and 60 on 10 Aug at *Sedan Appanoose* (RLC). Last was 1 at *Sandpiper RA Polk* on 13 Nov (MHB).

Great Egret: Some high counts were 100 on 20 Aug at *Harford WA Warren* (JS), 100 on 8 Sep at *Green Island Jackson* (KMc), and 118 on 25 Sep at *Red Rock Marion* (JG). The last 2 were below the *Saylorville* dam on 24 Oct (DTh).

Snowy Egret: For the first time since 1993, there were no reports.



Osprey, Sugar Bottom, Johnson, 10 August 2011. Photograph by Linda Rudolph, Coralville, IA.

Little Blue Heron: No reports.

Cattle Egret: 1 on 3 Oct at *Coralville L Johnson* (JF) and 2 on 12 Oct at *Hawkeye Johnson* (JF) were the only reports.

Green Heron: After 11 at *Woodpecker M Wayne* on 26 Aug (RLC), reports dwindled until the last on 29 Sep at *Otter Creek M Tama* (MP).

Black-crowned Night-Heron: Up to 8 at *Cedar L Linn* 8 Aug–13 Oct (BSc, BT, JF, JLF), 1 on 14 Aug near *Mondamin Harrison* (POR), 2 at *Credit Island Scott* 3–11 Sep (WMZ, POR), and the last 1 on 30 Nov at *Owego Wetlands Woodbury* (TLu).

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron: A juv was at *Big Creek L Polk* on 11 Sep (SJD).

White-faced Ibis: Two were seen on 13 Nov north of *Lone Rock* in *Kossuth*, but one was found dead 5 days later (T.J. Herick *vide* SJD). The date is a record-late date for birds identified to this species. Up to 23

ibis near Bartlett *Fremont* 17–24 Nov were not identified to species (KDy-photos) but represent a record late date for *Plegadis* in Iowa.

Turkey Vulture: Two fledged on 2 Aug from a traditional oak site in *Winneshiek* (LR). The season total of 4126 at Hitchcock hawk watch *Pottawattamie* was second only to last year's total (MO). Peak days at Hitchcock were 9–12 Oct when 1421 were counted. The last 2 were found 9 Nov at Coralville dam *Johnson* (LGR).

Osprey: From 1–4 were reported from 11 counties with the last two on 2 Nov at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* (TMH) and 3 Nov at George Wyth SP *Black Hawk* (DGE). The poor season total of 9 at Grammer Grove *Marshall* ranked 20th in 22 years.

Mississippi Kite: All 6 at Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* were seen in Sep, including the last of the season on 25 Sep (MO). Elsewhere, 1 was in Des Moines *Polk* 17 Aug (SJD), and 1 was at Grammer Grove *Marshall* 21 Sep (MP).

Bald Eagle: At Hitchcock hawk watch *Pottawattamie*, the season total of 1153 established a new record high (MO). At the other end of the state, 350 were counted 13 Nov along the Mississippi R at Lansing *Allamakee* (RZ).

Northern Harrier: The first few were 1 on 4 Sep at Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* (MO), 1 on 7 Sep at USNWR (MCK), and 1 on 8 Sep at Green Is *Jackson* (KMc). The big day at Hitchcock was 13 Oct when 43 were counted. The day before, 11 were observed as part of a movement of hawks following the edge of a thunderstorm in *Woodbury* (TLu).

Sharp-shinned Hawk: The first were 1 on 4 Sep in the sky over Algona (MCK) and 1 on 5 Sep at Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* (MO). The season total of 878 at Hitchcock was second worst only to the 766 of 2007,

however they were successful in capturing and banding 20 (JT). The flight at Grammer Grove *Marshall* was also poor with a total that was barely 38% of their best total.

Cooper's Hawk: Only 32 were counted at Grammer Grove *Marshall*, the worst flight in 22 years of record-keeping (MP). At Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie*, the season total of 260 was about at the 5-year average and included 19 captured and banded (JT).

Northern Goshawk: The first 2 occurred on 9 Oct at Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* (MO), followed by another on 18 Oct, then 1 on 22 Oct at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* (RG). There were four others at Hitchcock, plus 1 on 30 Oct in *Johnson* (CJB), 1 on 9 Nov at Saylorville *Polk* (POR) and 1 on 12 Nov at Green Bay Bottoms *Lee* (JWR).

Red-shouldered Hawk: Singles were reported from *Lee*, *Lucas*, *Tama*, *Clinton*, *Black Hawk* and *Allamakee*. Hawk watchers noted 5 at Grammer Grove *Marshall* (MP) and 2 at Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* (MO).

Broad-winged Hawk: The first big counts were 157 on 19 Sep *Pottawattamie* (MO), 368 in a single kettle on 23 Sep in *Polk* (AB), and 250 on 24 Sep at Grammer Grove *Marshall* (MP). The last were 36 on 12 Oct at Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* (MO), an unusually large number for so late in the season.

Swainson's Hawk: In the west, where the Loess Hills can serve as a natural migration corridor, the flight was barely detectable. The season total of 143 was the worst ever at the Hitchcock hawk watch in *Pottawattamie* (MO). The first few days of sightings were 11, 13, 15 Sep, and the peak at Hitchcock occurred on 15 Oct when a mere 48 were counted (MO). Away from Hitchcock, 6 were near Bronson *Woodbury* on 12 Oct (TLu) and singles were in *Madison* on 21 Sep (DTh), *Marshall* on 21 Sep (MP), *Palo Alto* on 24 Sep (TLu), *Wood-*

bury on 13 Oct (TLu), and *Cass* on 16 Oct (POR).

Red-tailed Hawk: Flights at both hawk watches were modest. Peak counts occurred 18, 19 Oct (MO, MP).

FERRUGINOUS HAWK: A light morph adult cruised past the Hitchcock tower *Pottawattamie* 15 Oct (*MO), the eleventh sighting since the hawk watch began in 2002.

Rough-legged Hawk: The first few were 1 on 29 Oct near Bartlett *Fremont* (KDY), 2 on 6 Nov at Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* (MO) and another the next day. Totals at both hawk watches were below their historical averages.

Golden Eagle: First noted 19, 21, 23 Oct at Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* where the season total of 26 was the second highest in ten years (MO). Five others were counted at Grammer Grove *Marshall* starting with 1 on 30 Oct and including 3 on 27 Nov (MP); 1 or 2 were also found in *Allamakee*, *Cerro Gordo*, *Johnson*, *Page* and *Polk* (BSc, RG, CRE, KDy, DTh).

American Kestrel: Still in decline. The 16 at Grammer Grove *Marshall* was a mere 26% of the historical peak, and the 85 at Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* was 1 more than the record low season total set in 2008 (MP, MO).

Merlin: Widely reported from 11 counties, always individuals, with the first few on 4, 5, 7, Sep (SJD, MO, MCK). The 58 counted at Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* was right at the 5-year average (MO). Away from Hitchcock, all birds identified to race were judged to be *columbarius*.

Peregrine Falcon: The flight at Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* was a "runaway season record - they just kept coming" (MO). Eighty-one of the 109 individuals occurred in the first half of October, with 48 of those in the three day period 10–12 Oct. Two

were captured and banded, both juvenile *tundrius*. Then, the season ended abruptly the next day with a single bird. Away from Hitchcock, sightings continued with 1 on 18 Oct at Saylorville *Polk* (SJD), another there on 24 Oct (DTh), 1 on 30 Oct at Grammer Grove *Marshall* (MP), and the last on 16 Nov at Owego Wetlands *Woodbury* (POR).

Prairie Falcon: Three singles were seen by hawk watchers at Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* on 23 Oct, 9 Nov, and 25 Nov (MO).

Yellow Rail: One was seen at Horse-shoe Bend *Louisa* on 7 Oct (Chuck Fuller) and 3 were flushed from a dry prairie in *Marshall* on 16 Oct (CK).

Virginia Rail: The only reports came on 20 Aug from *Woodbury*—1 at Table M (POR) and another at Sandhill L (GLV).

Sora: The last was 1 on 9 Oct at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (BSc).

American Coot: More than 71,000 were estimated at Pool 13 *Clinton* 17–24 Oct (USFWS) and half again as many at Pool 9 *Allamakee*. In central Iowa, numbers peaked on 29 Oct with 9790 at Saylorville *Polk* (SJD, JB, RLC) and 7000 at Rathbun *Appanoose* (TNJ).

Sandhill Crane: Pairs were noted in Aug at Panicum Prairie *Worth* (TMH), Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (JF), and Pool 11 *Dubuque* (SJD). Larger groups were 4 at Sweet M *Bremer* on 14 Aug (BT), 2–11 at Otter Creek M *Tama* until 8 Oct (SJD, MP, BT), 10–15 at Cone M *Louisa* until 26 Oct (JLF, KMc), and 25 in flight past the hawk watch tower at Hitchcock *Pottawattamie* 13 Nov (MO).

Black-bellied Plover: The first was 1 on 8 Aug at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (JF), three weeks ahead of the second on 31 Aug at USNWR *Kossuth* (MCK). Found in small numbers at nine locations, except for 20

at Saylorville *Polk* 2–8 Oct (SJD, AB) and 42 along the Des Moines R *Marion* on 25 Sep (JG). The last two were at Spring Run *Dickinson* 11 Nov (LAS) and Roberts Creek P *Marion* 25 Nov (SJD).

American Golden-Plover: The first 3 were adults found 26 Aug at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (JF), two weeks ahead of the start of steady reports. Found at nine locations in an aggregate total of 1309 reminiscent of days gone by. Peaks were 170 on 25 Sep in rural *Mills* (LJP, BKP), 220 at Saylorville 8 Oct (AB), 350 at Pinchey *Marion* 2 Oct (JS, JG, RIA), and 530 near Bartlett *Fremont* 29 Oct (KDY, LJP, BKP). The latter is the highest fall count since 1990. The last few were 3rd-latest on 24 Nov at Bartlett and also Saylorville (KDY, AB).

Semipalmated Plover: Reported only from Saylorville *Polk*, Sedan *Appanoose*, and Pinchey *Marion*, (SJD, MP, AB, RLC). The most was 21 at Saylorville 11 Sep (SJD) the same place the last 3 were found 20 Oct (SJD).

Killdeer: Gatherings in excess of 500 were common even into Nov where the most was 1150 at DeSoto NWR *Harrison* 9 Nov (USFWS).

Black-necked Stilt: Rare in fall, 5 were found 17 Aug at a wetland on the edge of Mt. Pleasant *Henry*, and stayed through 3 Sep (JLF, JJD-details, RIA, CRE, JWR, POR). This is only the third fall record for this species, and is the earliest. The other two occurred 28 Aug 2004 and 5 Sep 1994.

American Avocet: After arriving at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* in July (Dinsmore 2011), avocets continued to be reliable at this location until 30 Sep (JF, JJD, JLF, CRE). From 1–7 were at Saylorville *Polk* 17 Aug–16 Oct (SJD, AB, RIA, JCe, BE). The most was 29 on 20 Aug at the NW edge of Red Rock Res *Marion* (JJD, SJD), where there were still 5 on 27 Sep (JG, DTh). Between

1–5 were also found 3 Sep at Hartford WA *Warren* (JS), 5 Sep at Burr Oak L *Emmet* (LAS), 13 Sep at Cedar L *Linn* (JF), 30 Oct in rural *Fremont* (LJP, BKP), and the last 2 at L *Macbride Johnson* 5 Nov (JF).

Spotted Sandpiper: The last 5 were at Seminole Valley P *Linn* 19 Sep (BT).

Solitary Sandpiper: Except for 4 on 31 Aug at USNWR *Kossuth* (MCK), all were solitary. The last was 1 on 16 Sep at Ft Atkinson Sewage Ponds *Winneshiek* (DC, JB).

Greater Yellowlegs: The only two groups were 18 on 19 Oct at DeSoto NWR *Harrison* (USFWS) and 23 at Saylorville *Polk* on 1 Nov (SJD). The last was 1 on 23 Nov at Brushy Creek *Webster* (SJD-details).

Willet: All: 16 roosting on a flooded section of Interstate 29 *Fremont* 4 Aug (SJD), 2 at Saylorville *Polk* on 5 Aug (SJD), and 2 at Burr Oak *Winneshiek* 27 Aug, which was a first fall record for the county (DC).

Lesser Yellowlegs. The most was 200 on 20 Aug at USNWR *Kossuth* (MCK) and the last was 28 on 24 Nov near Bartlett *Fremont* (KDY), the only Nov report.

Upland Sandpiper: All: 1 on 3 Aug in BBA block 395 *Linn* (BSc), 1 on 8 Aug at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* and 3 more there on 24 Aug (JF).

Hudsonian Godwit: After finding 1 at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* in July (Dinsmore 2011), JF revisited the site on 4 Aug and counted 5. Elsewhere, a juv was at Jester Park *Polk* 17, 18 Sep (AB-details, JCe, SJD) and 1 was at the NW end of Red Rock *Marion* 27 Sep (DTh), a 3rd-latest date.

Marbled Godwit: Four reports from 4 locations plus two from July (Dinsmore 2011) may be the most on record for fall. 1 was at Hartford WA *Warren* on 15 Aug (JS), 1 was at Red Rock *Marion* on 20 Aug (JJD, SJD), 1 was at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* on 24 Aug (JF), and 2 at Saylorville *Polk* on 24 Aug (SJD).



Red Knots, Saylorville Res, Polk, 30 August 2011. Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore, Ames, IA.

Ruddy Turnstone: The first was an adult on 3 Aug at Saylorville *Polk* (SJD). Two were found in Ft. Madison *Lee* on 6 Sep (JWR), and at least 2 juvs were at Saylorville in Sep with the last still present on 18 Oct (SJD), a 3rd-latest date.

Red Knot: Two juvs were at Saylorville *Polk* 30 Aug (SJD-photo), 2 others were at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* 2, 3 Sep (JF), and an adult was at Hartford WA *Warren* 3 Sep (JS).

Sanderling: Reported from only four locations: 1 on 7 Aug at Cedar L *Linn* (BSc), shifting numbers at Saylorville *Polk* peaking at 66 on 18 Sep (SJD, AB, JCe, DTh), 1 on 14 Sep at Woodpecker M *Wayne* (RLC), and the high count of 93 along the waterfront at Ft Madison *Lee* 20 Sep (JWR). The last was 6 on 30 Oct at Jester P *Polk* (RLC, SJD).

Semipalmated Sandpiper: From 1–12 reported from six locations (WO, JB, RLC), with the exception of 67 on 26 Aug at Saylorville *Polk* (SJD). Last were 2 on 9 Oct at Buffalo Basins WMA *Franklin* (SJD).

Western Sandpiper: Up to 6 juvs were at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* 17–30 Aug (JF, CRE, BSc). At Saylorville *Polk*, 1 or 2 juvs were found 18–24 Aug (RIA, SJD) fol-

lowed by a third 27 Sep (RLC).

Least Sandpiper: Some high counts were 100 on 15 Oct at Red Rock *Marion* (JS), 224 on 1 Aug at Saylorville *Polk* (SJD), and nearly 300 at USNWR *Kossuth* 20 Aug (MCK). The last was a juv at Big Creek *Polk* 18 Nov (SJD).

White-rumped Sandpiper: There were six reports of this rare fall migrant. The three with careful details

were all at Saylorville *Polk*: 1 on 23 Aug (AB), 3 on 31 Aug (DTh), and 1 on 4 Sep (SJD).

Baird's Sandpiper: Returned to Iowa in July (Dinsmore 2012). Some high counts were 85 on 30 Aug at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (JF) and 33 at Saylorville 4 Sep (SJD, JB). The last few were 2 on 1 Nov at Teal Basin *Cerro Gordo* (RG) and 1 on 2 Nov at Bob Pyle M *Story* (SJD).

Pectoral Sandpiper: The high counts were all in late Aug—200 on 20 Aug at Sedan Bottoms *Appanoose* (RLC), 500 on 20 Aug at USNWR *Kossuth* (MCK), and 1379 on 24 Aug at Saylorville *Polk* (SJD). Last was 1 on 22 Nov at Winter's Pond *Winneshiekie*, a record late date for the county (LR).

Dunlin: Unusual was a molting adult at Hawkeye *Johnson* 9–23 Aug (JF, JJD, BSc). Otherwise, no one encountered any until the month of Oct. One was at the west end of Red Rock *Marion* 2 Oct (JS), 14 were at USNWR *Kossuth* 5 Oct (MCK), 24 were at Saylorville *Polk* 29, 30 Oct (AB, SJD) with 5 remaining through 5 Nov, and the last 4 were at Ventura M *Cerro Gordo* 7 Nov (RG).

Stilt Sandpiper: The most was 131

on 7 Sep at USNWR *Kossuth* (MCK). Another 111 were at Saylorville *Polk* 26 Aug (SJD), 75 were at Red Rock *Marion* on 15 Oct, 45 were at Woodpecker M *Wayne* 14 Sep (RLC). Also reported from *Winneshiek*, *Appanoose* and *Warren*, with the last 1 on 25 Oct at Bob Pyle M *Story* (SJD).

Buff-breasted Sandpiper: After the first returns arrived in July (Dinsmore 2011), reports remained steady through Aug and Sep. At Saylorville 15 on 17 Aug (AB) built to 48 by 4 Sep (SJD), then dropped back to 15 on 17 Sep (JCe) with the last a single juv on 1 Oct (SJD). Other notable groups were 11 on 30 Aug at Blue Grass sod farm *Linn* (BSc), 10 on 31 Aug at USNWR *Kossuth* (MCK), and 11 on 3 Sep at Seven Cities sod farm *Scott* (POR). Also reported from *Johnson*, *Page*, *Franklin*, *Warren*, *Emmet* and *Delaware*.

Short-billed Dowitcher: Returned on 20 Jul (Dinsmore 2011), then was found twice in Aug at Red Rock *Marion* and Saylorville *Polk*, and once in Sep on the 14th at Saylorville (MCK, AB, SJD).

Long-billed Dowitcher: The first few were an adult on 4 Aug at Saylorville *Polk* (SJD), another there on 21 Aug (AB), then 1 on 1 Sep at Sand Lake *Marshall* (MP). The most was 56 on 27 Oct near Bartlett *Freemont* (K Dy) and the last were 3 on 30 Oct at Saylorville (SJD).

Wilson's Snipe: The first two were found 20 Aug at Sedan Bottoms *Appanoose* (RLC) followed by another on 25 Aug at Hawkeye *Johnson* (BSc). The high count was 42 on 26 Oct at Cone M *Louisa* (KMc).

American Woodcock: Single individuals of this elusive species were flushed four times—9 Aug from river bottom timber on the edge of *Algona* (MCK), 13 Sep from a woodland trail at Indian Creek Nature Center *Linn* (BSc), and twice on 9 Nov in *Polk* (JB) and *Marshall* (MP).

Wilson's Phalarope: All: 1 on 20 Aug at Red Rock *Marion* (JJD), 1 on 23 Aug at Saylorville *Polk* (AB), and 2 on 27 Aug at Burr Oak *Winneshiek* (DC).

Red-necked Phalarope: Found in small numbers at 7 locations. Up to 22 were at Hawkeye *Johnson* 4–26 Aug (JF, JLF, RIA, CRE, BSc), 1–3 at USNWR *Kossuth* 20 Aug–7 Sep (MCK), up to 11 at Saylorville *Polk* 21 Aug–17 Sep (SJD, AB, JG), 33 on 3 Sep at Spirit L *Dickinson* (LAS), 1 on 18 Sep at Clarion sewage lagoon *Wright* (MCK), 1 on 20 Sep in *Lee* (JWR), and 1 on 25 Sep at Red Rock *Marion* (JG).

Sabine's Gull: A juv was at Saylorville *Polk* 14 Sep (SJD), another was at Red Rock *Marion* 25 Sep (JG), and a third juv was Red Rock 22 Oct (CF).

Bonaparte's Gull: Peak numbers at four locations were 296 on 30 Oct at Saylorville *Polk* (SJD, JG, BE), 460 on 12 Nov at Red Rock *Marion* (AB, JCe), 150 on 4 Nov at L Manawa *Pottawattamie* (LJP, BKP), and 95 on 19 Nov at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* (PH). Elsewhere, 1 was at Pleasant Creek *Linn* 28 Sep (BSc) and the last were 3 on 28 Nov on the Mississippi R *Scott* (WMZ).

BLACK-HEADED GULL: No reports.

Franklin's Gull: The first 5 were on 8 Aug at Ada Hayden P *Story* (WO). Reports of 4000–5000 came from Lake Manawa *Pottawattamie* 16 Sep (LJP, BKP), Saint Mary's Twp Mills 1 Oct (LJP, BKP), Saylorville *Polk* 1 Oct (SJD), Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* on 12 Oct (MO), and Clear L *Cerro Gordo* 22 Nov (PH).

Ring-billed Gull: The most was about 10,000 at Clear L Nov 22 (PH). Between 3000–4000 were at Saylorville the same day (AB, SJD).

Herring Gull: The first few were 1 on 27 Aug at Pool 11 *Dubuque* (SJD), 1 on 19 Sep on the Mississippi R *Des Moines* (KMc), and 1 on 19 Sep at Jester P *Polk* (DTh). The

most was 39 on 21 Oct at Pool 13 Clinton (KMc).

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Two reports of single adults were separated by about a month, so may have referred to the same bird—10 Oct at Red Rock Marion (CF) and 21 Nov at Fisher L Polk (JG, POR).

Glaucous Gull: A juv was record early on 27 Oct at the Clinton waterfront Clinton (JLF). Three other juvs were singles on 13 Nov at Ft. Madison Lee (CF), 18–21 Nov splitting time between Saylorville and Fisher L Polk (AB, JB, JG, BE), and 23–27 at Cedar L Linn (JF, BT).

Least Tern: Although as many as 34 adults were at MidAmerican Energy ponds Pottawattamie in July (Dinsmore 2011), no one reported any fall birds in the west. The only reports were three at Saylorville Polk—an adult on 9 Aug and 2 juvs on 24 Aug (SJD).

Caspian Tern: The first reports were 1 on 7–13 Aug at Jester Park Polk (BE, JB) and 1 on 13 Aug at Cedar L Linn (BT). Peaked at Saylorville with 198 on 3 Sep (SJD, AB, BE). The last two were 1 on 12 Sep at Sand L Marshall (MP) and 1 on 14 Sep at Woodpecker M Wayne (RLC).

Black Tern: Two were at Hawkeye Johnson 13 Aug (JJD) and 36 were at Sedan Bottoms Appanoose 20 Aug (RLC). On 3 Sep, from 7–36 were seen at three different locations—Pleasant Creek Linn (BSc), Saylorville Polk (SJD, AB), and Diehl Wetlands Warren (JS), and the next day they were gone from the state.

Common Tern: The only reports came from Saylorville Polk where singles were found 9 Aug, 24 Aug and 3 Sep (SJD), and 14 were counted on 13 Oct (AB).

Forster's Tern: Peaked at Saylorville Polk 3 Sep when up to 158 were counted (SJD, AB). Elsewhere, 5 were Cedar L Linn 13 Aug (BT), 6 were at L Rathbun Appa-

noose 20 Aug (RLC), and 5 were at Ventura M Cerro Gordo 24 Aug (TMH). The last were 5 at Saylorville 29 Oct (AB, SJD).

Eurasian Collared-Dove: Two of the larger counts were 24 on 21 Oct at Elvira Clinton (KMc) and 30 on 12 Nov at Brown's L Woodbury (GLV).

White-winged Dove: Up to 3 that spent the summer in the city of Shenandoah were last seen 9 Nov (KDy).

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: The only report from the far west was 1 at Owego Wetlands Woodbury on 15 Aug (GLV). Otherwise, singles were reported from Boone, Des Moines, Jackson, Marshall, Polk and Story (LGD, KMc, MP, JB, WO) and up to 5 were at Sedan Appanoose 10 Aug (RLC). The last was at Pleasant Creek Jackson 20 Sep (KMc).

Black-billed Cuckoo: Two were singing from different ends of Call P Kossuth 11 Aug (MCK), 1 was at Black Hawk WA Sac 19 Aug (POR), 1 was at Indian Creek NC Linn 15 Sep (JF), and the last was getting late on 13 Oct in rural Cerro Gordo (RG).

Barn Owl: Two were in Tama (IA DNR) where evidence of nesting was observed during summer months (Dinsmore 2011).

Snowy Owl: The first, a juv male found on 7 Nov in O'Brien (Charlene Elyea) was not especially early, but together with 13 that followed made the fall total the highest since 1976, and was a clear indication that something unusual was happening. The second, a juv male on 17 Nov near Glasgow Jefferson was the first one photographed (Aaron Helterbran-photo). Four of the 14 fall birds were either picked up dead, or died shortly after a rescue attempt. All five whose ages were reported were determined to be juveniles. Sightings also came from Black Hawk, Cerro Gordo, Clay, Fremont, Hamilton, Ida, Louisa, Mahaska, Marshall, Plymouth, Sioux and Woodbury.

Long-eared Owl: The first two were a

surprise find at Wintergarden P *Cerro Gordo* 23 Oct during a search for Saw-whets (PH). Two others were at Moorehead P *Ida* beginning on 8 Nov (DoP) and 3 were at Union Grove SP *Tama* 25 Nov (MP).

Short-eared Owl: The first were 4 at Diehl Wetlands *Warren* 5 Nov (JS). At Owego *Woodbury*, up to 6 were found from 20 Nov to the end of the season (GLV, TLu, POR). Two were at Neal Smith NWR *Jasper* 28 Nov (KVS).

Northern Saw-whet Owl: At the Hitchcock banding station *Pottawattamie*, nets were set up 8 Oct but the first capture wasn't until 17 Oct. A total of 72 captures through 28 Nov surpassed last season's total by 17 birds (JT) and included 13 banded on the night of 30 Oct (Elliott Bedows). At Mount Ayr WA *Ringgold* 6 were captured and banded during the 2-day period 31 Oct–1 Nov (JT). Elsewhere, Saw-whets were found at two locations—1 or 2 were at Moorehead P *Ida* from 31 Oct to the end of the season (DoP) and 1 was at Saylorville *Polk* 27 Nov (SJD).

Common Nighthawk: Under-reported with no large movements noted. The last was 3 on 9 Oct at Cedar Rapids *Linn* (BT).

Eastern Whip-poor-will: One was found 10 Aug at Sedan Bottoms *Appanoose* (RLC) and another was at Mason City 13 Sep (RG).

Chimney Swift: Numbers dwindled to ones and twos in the second week of Oct. The last few were 1 on 10 Oct in *Jefferson* (DCP) and 2 on 12 Oct in *Dubuque* (KMc).

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: Reports dried up early considering the mild weather. There was only one Oct report, on 13 Oct in *Indianola* (JS).

Red-headed Woodpecker: The 61 at Hitchcock NC *Pottawattamie* on 8 Sep (MO) suggest the heaviest movement was in the second week of Sep. The day before,



Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Boone, 15 September 2011. Photograph by Larry Dau, Boone, IA.

11 were in Loess Hills State Forest *Monona* (DTh). Also reported from *Clay*, *Ida*, *Kosuth* and *Scott* (TMH, DoP, MCK, WMZ).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: There were widely-scattered sightings of 1 or 2 especially in mid- to late-Sep, except for 6 on 20 Sep at Pleasant Creek *Jackson* (KMc) and 4 on 27 Sep at *Algona* (MCK).

Pileated Woodpecker: Reported from nine eastern and central counties on days spanning the period. BSc reported 4 distinct birds in *Linn* and MP reported 3 in *Hardin*. Unusual were 8 at Huron Island *Des Moines* on 19 Sep (KMc).

Olive-sided Flycatcher: The first two were found 14 Aug, one at Ada Hayden P *Story*, and another at Jester P *Polk* (WO, JB). Three were at Owego Wetlands *Woodbury* on 20 Aug (GLV). Four Sep reports came from *Appanoose*, *Boone*, *Polk* and *Story* (RLC, DCH, WO, DTh), and then the last was 1 on 15 Oct at Brower L *Woodbury* (POR), a 2nd-latest date.

Eastern Wood-Pewee: The last, 1 on 23 Oct in *Warren* (JS), tied the latest date on record.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: There were only four reports, all of single birds—1 on



Great Crested Flycatcher, Boone, 29 August 2011. Photograph by Larry Dau, Boone, IA.

24 Aug at Grammer Grove Marshall (MP), 1 on 27 Aug at L Meyer Winneshiek (MCK), 1 on 31 Aug at Squaw Creek Linn (BSc), and 1 on 10 Sep at Seminole Valley P Linn (BT).

Acadian Flycatcher: One was still singing on 27 Aug at Smith WA Kossuth (MCK) and the last was near Maynes Grove Franklin on 27 Aug (POR).

Alder Flycatcher: The first, found singing on 6 Aug at Polk City WA Polk (JB), was 2nd-earliest. The next day, another was found at Anderson L Hamilton (SJD) and became the 3rd-earliest. The last three were all heard singing in late Aug. One was at Pine L Jasper (MP) on 16 Aug, another was on 18 Aug at Rock Creek Jasper (JF), and the last was 1 on 23 Aug at Anderson L Hamilton (SJD).

Willow Flycatcher: The last two were 1 on 7 Aug at Anderson L Hamilton (SJD) and 1 on 29 Aug at Sparks Cemetery Boone (LGD).

Least Flycatcher: There were three Aug reports and two Sep reports. The latter two were 1 on 18 Sep at Cottonwood RA Polk, (RLC) and 1 on 19 Sep at Huron Island Des Moines (KMc).

Eastern Phoebe: The last was 1 on 29 Oct at Saylorville Polk (AB).

Great Crested Flycatcher: One was 2nd-latest on 3 Nov at George Wyth SP Black Hawk (DGE-details).

Western Kingbird: No reports.

Eastern Kingbird: Two modest counts were 40 on 20 Aug at Sedan Bottoms Appanoose (RLC) and 62 on 4 Sep at Mount Ayr WA Ringgold (SJD). The last was 1 on 17 Sep at Saylorville Polk (AB).

Loggerhead Shrike: There were two Aug reports and two Nov reports, all from the southern half of the state in Polk, Warren and Taylor (SJD, JS).

Northern Shrike: The first few were 1 on 19 Oct at Ada Hayden P Story (WO), 1 on 21 Oct near Iowa Falls Hardin (TSS), and 1 on 25 Oct at Prairie L Dickinson (ET). There were 25 distinct reports from 16 counties, including up to 6 in the vicinity of Big Creek Polk 5 Nov (AB, JB) and at least 5 on 30 Nov in western Woodbury (TLu).

White-eyed Vireo: After one was found in late summer at Starr's Cave Des Moines (Dinsmore 2011), a singing individual continued to be found there until 22 Sep (JWR). The only other report was 1 on 3 Sep at Sedan Bottoms Appanoose (RLC).

Bell's Vireo: September birds still singing were 1 on 7 Sep at Loess Hills SF Monona (DTh) and 1 on 11 Sep in rural Warren (JS), which was the last.

Yellow-throated Vireo: The last and the only Oct bird was 1 on 2 Oct at Saylorville Polk (SJD-photo).

Blue-headed Vireo: The first was 1 on 8 Sep at Ada Hayden P Story (WO) followed

by another on 10 Sep at Grammer Grove *Marshall* (MP). Considering the latest dates for this species are all in Nov, the last departed early on 9 Oct at Jester P *Polk* (RLC).

Warbling Vireo: The last, on 2 Oct at Saylorville *Polk* (SJD), was record-late by a day.

Philadelphia Vireo: The first arrival was at Lake Meyer *Winneshiek* on 14 Aug (LR). Two at Shaver P *Linn* on 30 Sep were getting late (BSc), but the last, on 8 Oct at Brenton Arboretum *Dallas* (JB), was 3rd-latest.

Red-eyed Vireo: One on 28 Sep at Grammer Grove *Marshall* (MP) would have been the last had it not been for a very late individual a month later on 26 Oct at Red Cedar WA *Muscatine* (KMc).

Purple Martin: No large groups were noted. The most was a mere 10 on 16 Aug at Eldora *Hardin* (MP). The last was 1 on 20 Aug at Sedan Bottoms *Appanoose* (RLC) a very early departure date.

Tree Swallow: Huge numbers gathered at Saylorville *Polk* in mid- to late-Sep and early Oct. Some 20,000 were estimated there on 14 Sep, and another 13,200 were there on 2 Oct (SJD, AB). At Red Rock *Marion*, there were still 3000 on 15 Oct (JS). The last were 2 on 20 Oct near Nevada *Story* (Michael Meetz).

Northern Rough-winged Swallow: The last 10 were at Gray's L *Polk* 10 Oct (JB).

Bank Swallow: Some high counts were 800 on 15 Aug at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (JJJ) and 300 on 20 Aug at Sedan Bottoms *Appanoose* (RLC). The last was 1 at Saylorville *Polk* 24 Sep (AB).

Cliff Swallow: The last was 1 on 10 Sep at Ada Hayden P *Story* (WO).

Barn Swallow: About 1700 were estimated at Saylorville *Polk* 2 Oct (SJD), but then left early. Within a week, they were gone from the state, with the last 3 at Hawkeye *Johnson* 9 Oct (BSc).

Red-breasted Nuthatch: The first was 1 at Lake Meyer *Winneshiek* on 14 Aug (LR), followed by three Sep reports of single birds (MCK, MP, JB). Late groups were 4 on 1 Nov at Pinicon P *Linn* (BSc) and 11 on 20 Nov at Hampton Cemetery *Franklin* (SJD).

Brown Creeper: The first was 1 at Willowglen Nursery *Winneshiek* 23 Sep (LZ). Four were in Algona on 27 Sep (MCK) and 10 were at Eagle Point *Clinton* 21 Oct (KMc). Also reported from *Poweshiek* and *Woodbury* (MP, GLV).

Carolina Wren: There were 3 reports of single birds, one from the far west on 22 Oct in *Sioux City* (GLV).

House Wren: The last was 1 on 25 Oct at Bever P in *Cedar Rapids* (BSc).

Winter Wren: The first 5 arrivals were at Parker's Woods *Cerro Gordo* 30 Sep (RG) followed by 1 at Grammer Grove *Marshall* 1 Oct (MP) and 3 at Woodland Mounds *Warren* 9 Oct (JS). Also reported from *Boone*, *Winneshiek* and *Linn*.

Sedge Wren: One on 9 Oct at Hawkeye *Johnson* (BSc) and another on 23 Oct in rural *Warren* (JS) were getting late.



Northern Shrike, Saylorville Res, Polk, 4 November 2011. Photograph by John Bissell, Grimes, IA.



Marsh Wren, Good Neighbors M, Winnebago, 5 October 2011. Photograph by Tyler M. Harms, Ames, IA.

Marsh Wren: A few were still singing at Hawkeye Johnson on 9 Oct (BSc).

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: Family groups were found in Aug at Waterworks P Polk (JB) and Smith WA Kossuth (MCK). The last two were 1 at Shaver P Linn 20 Sep (BSc) and 1 at Algona 25 Sep (MCK).

Golden-crowned Kinglet: Singles first appeared on 1, 2, 3 Oct in Marshall, Cerro Gordo and Polk (MP, RG, AMJ). The most was 56 at Eagle Pt. Clinton on 21 Oct (KMc).

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: The first few were 1 on 17 Sep at Grammer Grove Marshall (MP) and 2 on 18 Sep at Cottonwood RA Polk (RLC). As many as 32 were in Des Moines on 16 Oct (SJD). No reports followed the 24 on 21 Oct in Clinton (KMc).

Eastern Bluebird: A pair on 29 Aug still had 2 young in the box with about a week to fledge in Cherokee (DB).

Townsend's Solitaire: One was found 3 Oct at Easter L Polk (AMJ, RIA) and an-

other was south of Guthrie Center Guthrie 4 Nov (Stuart Stringham).

Veery: Singles were at Grammer Grove Marshall on 20, 31 Aug (MP), 4 were at SeedSavers Winneshiek 28 Aug (JB), 1 was at Parker's Woods Cerro Gordo 5 Sep (RG), and the last was in Ames 13 Sep (SJD).

Gray-cheeked Thrush: One was found 10 Sep at Seminole Valley P Linn (BSc), multiple flight calls were heard 18 Sep over Algona (MCK), and 1 was at Pleasant Creek WA Jackson 20 Sep (KMc).

Swainson's Thrush: The first were found at SeedSavers Winneshiek 28 Aug (MP, JB). About 4 calls per minute were heard over Algona during the early evening of 18 Sep (MCK). Visual observations came from Jackson, Linn, Marshall, Story and Warren, (KMc, BSc, MP, JS) with the last 1 on 15 Oct at Ada Hayden P Story (WO-details).

Hermit Thrush: The first 3 were found at Smith WA Kossuth on 27 Sep (MCK), the only Sep report. The most was 9 on 23 Oct in woodlands surrounding Wintergarden P Cerro Gordo (PH). Reports ceased after 2 on 26 Oct in Muscatine (KMc).

Wood Thrush: 1 at Grammer Grove Marshall 5 Sep (MP), and another at Smith WA Kossuth 25 Sep (MCK) were the only reports.

Varied Thrush: One appeared in a Spirit Lake yard 15 Nov, and stayed to the end of the season (ET).

Gray Catbird: The last was 1 in rural Polk on 16 Oct (JS).

Northern Mockingbird: One was at Cone M Louisa 26 Oct (KMc), and another was an Iowa City yard bird for JLF on 25 Nov.

American Pipit: The first few were 1 on 24 Sep at Saylorville Polk (JB), then 20 on 2 Oct at Red Rock Marion (JS). Some larger groups were 100 on 5 Oct at USNWR Kossuth (MCK), and 154 on 30 Oct at Saylorville Polk (SJD). Also reported from Cerro

Gordo, Dickinson, Hardin, Louisa, Winneshiek and Woodbury.

Lapland Longspur: The first was a flock of about 200 at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* on 29 Oct (Paul Willis *fide* PH). The next day, 600 were at Saylorville *Polk* (SJD) and 400 were at Luton WMA *Woodbury* (TLu). Other noteworthy flocks were 500 on 8 Nov in *Story* (Michael Meetz) and 1620 at Hanlontown M *Worth* on 25 Nov (JB).

Smith's Longspur: All: 3 on 9 Oct at Buffalo Basins *Franklin* (SJD), a 3rd-earliest date, 1 on 23 Oct in a mowed section of a prairie near Clear L *Cerro Gordo* (PH), 12 on 30 Oct in a grassy field adjacent to Luton *Woodbury* (TLu), and about 22 on 14 Nov in flight at Snake Creek M *Greene* (DCH).

Snow Bunting: The first few were 1 on 20 Oct at Saylorville *Polk* (SJD), 1 on 22 Oct at Red Rock *Marion* (SJD), and 2 on 2 Nov at Pleasant Creek *Linn* (BSc).

Ovenbird: The last was 1 in Norwalk on 5 Oct (AMJ).

Worm-eating Warbler: One was 2nd-latest on 25 Sep at Lacey-Keosauqua SP *Van Buren* (RLC-details).

Louisiana Waterthrush: At Southwood Conservation Area *Woodbury*, where they have nested in the past, one was heard and seen on 10 Sep, a 2nd-latest date (POR-details, TLu).

Northern Waterthrush: The first was 1 on 10 Aug at Smith WA *Kossuth* (MCK). The last two were on 19, 20 Sep in *Tama* and *Jackson* (MP, KMc).

Golden-winged Warbler: The first was 1 on 24 Aug at Grammer Grove *Marshall* (MP). The last were 2 each at Stephens SF *Lucas* and Seminole Valley P *Linn* on 10 Sep (JS, BT).

Blue-winged Warbler: Reported only from counties in which it was seen over summer—*Winneshiek* on 27 Aug (LZ) and *Linn* on 31 Aug and 10 Sep (BSc, BT).

Black-and-white Warbler: The first was 1 on 5 Aug near the English River *Washington* (JJD). The last was 1 on 27 Sep at Pine L *Hardin* (MP).

Prothonotary Warbler: The only one was at Huron Island *Des Moines* on 19 Sep (KMc), a 2nd-latest date.

Tennessee Warbler: The first was at L Meyer *Winneshiek* 14 Aug (LR). The last two were the only Oct reports—one on 12 Oct at Grammer Grove *Marshall* (MP), and 1 on 21 Oct at Princeton M *Scott* (KMc).

Orange-crowned Warbler: The first two were on 18, 19 Sep in *Polk* and *Story* (JB, WO). As many as 6 were at Jester P *Polk* on 27 Sep (RLC), 8 were counted in the same area 16 Oct (JS), and 12 were in *Des Moines* 16 Oct (SJD). The last were 2 on 26 Oct at Red Cedar WA *Muscatine* (KMc).

Nashville Warbler: The most commonly reported warbler. The first was 1 at Lake Meyer *Winneshiek* on 13 Aug (LR) followed by two more Aug reports (WO, LZ). Then remained steady until early Oct. The



Tufted Titmouse, Iowa City, Johnson, 23 October 2011. Photograph by Jim Scheib, Iowa City, IA.



*Cooper's Hawk, Iowa City,
Johnson, 20 November 2011.
Photograph by Jim Scheib, Iowa
City, IA.*



*Lesser Black-backed Gull, Fisher I, Polk, 12 November
2011. Photograph by Paul O. Roisen, Sioux City, IA.*



*American White Pelicans, Saylorville Res, Polk, 18 September 2011. Photograph by Stephen J.
Dinsmore, Ames, IA.*



Snowy Owl, e of Stanhope, Hamilton, 24 November 2011. Photograph by Trey Faaborg, Garden City, IA.



Orange-crowned Warbler, Boone, 11 October 2011. Photograph by Larry Dau, Boone, IA.



Fox Sparrow, Boone, 9 November 2011. Photograph by Larry Dau, Boone, IA.



Savannah Sparrow, Woodbury, 15 October 2011. Photograph by Paul O. Roisen, Sioux City, IA.



Common Loon, Pleasant Creek L, Linn, 3 November 2011. Photograph by Jim Scheib, Iowa City, IA.

last three were on 11, 12 Oct in *Story, Marshall* and *Polk* (WO, MP, AB).

Mourning Warbler: One was at Waterworks P *Polk* 25 Aug (JB), another was at Grammer Grove *Marshall* 31 Aug (MP), a third was at Sparks Cemetery *Boone* on 1 Sep (LGD), and the last responded to vocal notes made by MCK at Smith WA *Kossuth* on 25 Sep.

Kentucky Warbler: The only one was a probable migrant at Starr's Cave *Des Moines* on 16 Aug (JWR).

Common Yellowthroat: The last was 1 on 6 Oct in rural *Tama* (MP).

Hooded Warbler: An extremely late individual was found at Lake Ahquabi SP *Warren* on 23 Oct (JS). The previous record late date was 6 Sep.

American Redstart: The last was 1 on 28 Sep at Grammer Grove *Marshall* (MP).

Cape May Warbler: The only report was 1 on 19 Sep at Huron Island *Des Moines* (KMc).

Northern Parula: The first report from a county in which there were no summer records was 1 on 24 Sep at Grammer Grove *Marshall* (MP). This was followed by 3 in *Van Buren* on 25 Sep (RLC), and the last 1 on 9 Oct in *Warren* (JS).

Magnolia Warbler: The first few were 1 on 25 Aug at Diamond L *Poweshiek* (MP), and 3 at L Meyer *Winneshiek* 27 Aug (MCK, JB). Reports were steady through the last on 28 Sep at Grammer Grove *Marshall* (MP).

Bay-breasted Warbler: The first was a Cedar Rapids yard bird for BSc on 21 Aug, and the last was a Johnston yard bird for DTh on 28 Sep. As many as 6 were in rural *Union* on 17 Sep (SJD).

Blackburnian Warbler: The first was 1 on 11 Aug at Waterworks P *Polk* (JB). The last was 6 on 28 Aug at Big Wall L *Wright* (SJD).

Yellow Warbler: Left in mid-Sep with

the last at Huron Island *Des Moines* on 19 Sep (KMc).

Chestnut-sided Warbler: After several summer reports (Dinsmore 2011), the first likely migrants were at Saylorville *Polk* on 20 Aug (JB) and Cedar Rapids the following day (BSc). The last one was at Grammer Grove *Marshall* on 28 Sep (MP).

Blackpoll Warbler: The only one was at Saylorville *Polk* on 26 Aug (SJD).

Black-throated Blue Warbler: A male was photographed at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* 28 Sep (LGR), another hit a window in Ames on 8 Oct and did not recover (PS), and a female was at Big Creek *Polk* 11 Oct (SJD).

Palm Warbler: The first was 1 on 23 Sep at Meier WA *Hardin* (MP). A member of the eastern race, which is uncommon in Iowa, was at Big Creek *Polk* on 11 Oct (SJD). The last was 2nd-latest on record on 30 Nov at Cedar L *Linn* (LGR-photo).

Pine Warbler: A juv at Lake of Three Fires SP *Taylor* on 4 Sep (SJD) was the only report.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: The first was 1 on 5 Sep at Chichaqua *Polk* (MHB). The high count of 22 on 21 Oct in *Clinton* (KMc) was disturbingly low. The last and only Nov report was 1 on 12 Nov at Sparks Cemetery *Boone* (LGD).

Yellow-throated Warbler: A male was at Starr's Cave *Des Moines* on 25 Aug (JWR), and another was at Lacey-Keosauqua *Van Buren* on 25 Sep (RLC).

Black-throated Green Warbler: Present during the brief window 10–27 Sep. The first two were at Seminole Valley P *Linn* (BT), and the last was at Algona on 27 Sep (MCK). Up to 7 were in *Dallas* 18 Sep (SJD).

Canada Warbler: All nine reports occurred in the latter half of Aug. The first was on 15 Aug in *Marion* (JS), and the last was on 31 Aug at Grammer Grove *Marshall*



Le Conte's Sparrow, Woodbury, 15 October 2011. Photograph by Paul O. Roisen, Sioux City, IA.

(MP), a very early departure date. No one reported more than 2.

Wilson's Warbler: First appeared on 22, 23, 24 Aug in *Cerro Gordo*, *Kossuth* and *Marshall* (RG, MCK, MP). The last was 1 on 25 Sep at *Jester Park Polk* (BE).

Spotted Towhee: A female at *Smith WA Kossuth* on 25 Sep was the first (MCK), followed quickly by another female at *Pine Lake SP Hardin* 27 Sep (MP). Two other reports were 1 on 15 Oct at *Hitchcock NA Pottawattamie* (GLV), and 1 on 17 Oct at *Ada Hayden P Story* (WO).

Eastern Towhee: The last was an Iowa City yard bird for JLF on 27 Nov.

American Tree Sparrow: The first was 1 near *Nevada Story* on 8 Oct, a 3rd-earliest date (Michael Meetz). Steady reports began on 19 Oct with 1 at *Ada Hayden P Story* (WO).

Chipping Sparrow: The last was 2 at *Red Cedar WA Muscatine* on 26 Oct (KMc).

Clay-colored Sparrow: One was at *Woodpecker M Wayne* 24 Sep (RLC-de-tails), and another was at *Cedar Falls In-*

dustrial Park Black Hawk on 14 Oct (TSS-photos).

Field Sparrow: The last was 3 on 26 Oct at *Red Cedar WA Muscatine* (KMc).

Vesper Sparrow: As many as 340 were counted in rural *Franklin* 9 Oct (SJD). The last was 1 on 21 Oct in *Clinton* (KMc).

Lark Sparrow: A mix of 4 juvs and adults were at a rural gravel pit in *Kossuth* 7 Aug (MCK). Another 4 were in *Page* on 4 Sep (SJD), and the last was 3 on 7 Sep at *Loess Hills SF Monona* (DTh).

Savannah Sparrow: Some high counts were 85 on 1 Oct at *Buckshot M Appanoose* (TNJ), 115 on 9 Oct in *Franklin* (SJD), and 69 in and around *Cone M Louisa* 26 Oct (KMc). The last was 1 on 22 Nov at *Lake of Three Fires Taylor* (CJL).

Grasshopper Sparrow: The last was 1 on 5 Oct at *Errington M Polk* (MP).

Henslow's Sparrow: There were two final reports, both on 9 Oct. One was at *Buffalo Basins WMA Franklin* (SJD), and 1 was at *Summerset BP Warren* (JS).

Le Conte's Sparrow: The first arrival, on 28 Sep at *Wickiup Hill Linn* (BSc), was the only Sep report. The high count was a modest 15 on 1 Oct at *Buckshot M Appanoose* (TNJ). The last, on 10 Nov at *Diehl Wetlands Warren* (JS), was the only Nov report.

Nelson's Sparrow: The first was 8 on 25 Sep at *Buckshot M Appanoose* (RLC), where as many as 35 were found on 1 Oct (TNJ). Most reports were of small numbers 1–4, with the last 1 on 12 Oct at *Harrier M Boone* (SJD).

Fox Sparrow: Arrived on the 20-year median arrival date of 27 Sep at *Smith WA Kossuth* (MCK). In the fourth week of Oct, high counts of 12, 12, 43 and 24 occurred within 4 days of each other in *Cerro Gordo*, *Winneshiek*, *Louisa* and *Kossuth* (PH, DC, KMc, MCK).



Lincoln's Sparrow, Ledges SP, Boone, 13 October 2011. Photograph by Doug Harr, Ogden, IA.

Lincoln's Sparrow: The first was 1 on 18 Sep at Saylorville *Polk* (JB), followed by 5 on 21 Sep in *Cerro Gordo* (RG) and a steady stream of reports until 25 Oct at Ada Hayden *Story* (WO). The most was 27 at Big Creek *Polk* on 11 Oct (SJD), and the last was an isolated bird on 13 Nov at Summerset BP *Warren* (JS).

Swamp Sparrow: Some high counts were 40 on 1 Oct at Buckshot M *Appanoose* (TNJ) and 58 on 11 Oct at Big Creek *Polk* (SJD).

White-throated Sparrow: The first was 1 on 19 Sep in Linn (BT), followed by 5 on 20 Sep in *Cerro Gordo* (PH). On 9 Oct, BE encountered so many at Chichaqua WA *Polk* he began a systematic count, resulting in a total of 345. Another 103 were at Red Cedar WA *Muscatine* 26 Oct (KMc).

Harris's Sparrow: The first 2 were at Grammer Grove *Marshall* on 1 Oct (MP), followed by 1 in *Dallas* on 2 Oct (JB). Some high counts were 66 in *Woodbury* on 9 Oct (POR "most I have ever seen in one day"), and 40 at Saylorville *Polk* on 1 Nov (SJD).

White-crowned Sparrow: First found

27 Sep at Hendrickson M *Marshall* (MP). Every year for the last 10 years, this species has arrived in the 4th week of Sep. The high count was 13 on 26 Oct at Cone M *Louisa* (KMc).

Dark-eyed Junco: One or two were found 29, 30 Sep in *Polk*, *Woodbury*, *Story* and *Hardin* (JB, GLV, WO, MP) to get things going.

Summer Tanager: Left early, in contrast to last year's Nov stragglers. The only Sep report was 1 on the 18th at Springbrook SP *Guthrie* (HZ).

Scarlet Tanager: The last four were 1 in Norwalk 3 Oct (AMJ), 1 at Easter L *Polk* on 4 Oct (AB), 1 at Lime Creek *Cerro Gordo* on 6 Oct (RG), and 1 at Parker's Woods *Cerro Gordo* on 10 Oct (RG).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: As many as 34 were counted at Sedan Bottoms *Appanoose* on 3 Sep (RLC). The last would have been the one found 11 Oct at Saylorville *Polk* (SJD), except Paulette Lugg photographed one at her feeder in Ventura on 29 Nov.

Blue Grosbeak: After a summer with unprecedented numbers in the east (Dinsmore 2011), reports continued from non-traditional locations. In fact, the last four reports were a singing male on 7 Aug south of Algona *Kossuth* (MCK), up to 4 birds 8–11 Aug at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (JF, JLF), and 1 in BBA block 343 *Crawford* on 17 Aug (GLV). By contrast, in the far west, none were found after 4 Aug.

Indigo Bunting: The last on 3 Oct was a Norwalk yard bird for AMJ.

Dickcissel: The last was 1 on 9 Oct at Buffalo Basin WMA *Franklin* (SJD).

Bobolink: The only flock reported was small—10 on 24 Aug at Sandpiper WMA *Cerro Gordo* (TMH). The last few were 2 on 5 Oct at Buckshot M *Appanoose* (TNJ), and 2 on 9 Oct at Buffalo Basins WMA *Franklin* (SJD).

Eastern Meadowlark: Males were still singing in *Story* on 12 Nov at Larson M (HZ) and on 20 Nov at Ada Hayden P (WO).

Western Meadowlark: Fourteen meadowlarks on 8 Nov in *Woodbury* were likely this species (POR).

Yellow-headed Blackbird: The only report was 1 on 11 Nov on the north side of Spirit L *Dickinson* (LAS).

Rusty Blackbird: The first was 11 on 2 Oct at Otter Creek M *Tama* (BT), followed by small handfuls on 3, 4, 5 Oct across the eastern half of the state. Some noteworthy high counts were 217 on 26 Oct at Cone M *Louisa* (KMc), and 250 on 14 Nov near Iowa Falls *Hardin* (TSS).

Brewer's Blackbird: The first were 2 on 26 Oct at Cone M *Louisa* (KMc), followed by 4 on 1 Nov at Teal Basin *Cerro Gordo* (RG). There were 30 at Rathbun *Appanoose* 20 Nov (RLC), and 150 at Tunnel Mill WA *Hamilton* on 23 Nov (SJD-photo). Also reported in small numbers from *Dickinson*, *Bremer* and *Marion* (LAS, DGE, SJD).



Harris's Sparrow, Boone, 13 November 2011.
Photograph by Larry Dau, Boone, IA.

Great-tailed Grackle: One was at Forney L *Fremont* on 4 Aug (SJD); 7 were in extreme western *Mills* on 8 Oct (KDy); a female was at L *Manawa Pottawattamie* on 26 Nov (AB).

Orchard Oriole: There were three Aug reports—a female on 2 Aug was a *Boone* yard bird for LGD, 1–3 were at Ada Hayden P *Story* 2–15 Aug (WO), and 2 were at Saylorsville *Polk* 6 Aug (JB).

Baltimore Oriole: The last was 2 at Pleasant Creek WA *Jackson* on 20 Sep (KMc).

Purple Finch: The first few were 2 on 9 Sep at Pine Lake SP *Hardin* (MP), and 2 on 10 Sep at Ventura (Paulette Lugg). Reports continued to the end of the season from 7 central and eastern counties.

Red Crossbill: A group of 7 feeding in spruce in *Algona* on 6 Nov (MCK) were thought to have characteristics of Type 5, a western mountain form. Another 2 were fly-overs on the NIACC campus in *Mason City* on 15 Nov (PH).

White-winged Crossbill: A female was photographed on 11 Nov in *Ames* (David C. Edwards *vide* SJD).

Common Redpoll: Five reports were the most in fall since 2004. Two were at Ottosen *Humboldt* on 2 Nov (JN), 1 was in Norwalk 27 Nov (AMJ) and 2 others were photographed in *Ames* on 27 Nov (SJD), 1 was photographed near Iowa Falls on 28 Nov (TSS), and 1 was at Riverview Cemetery in *Algona* on 28 Nov (MCK).

Pine Siskin: The first was 1 on 12 Aug in *Boone* (LGD), followed by reports of small numbers from *Clinton*, *Humboldt*, *Kossuth*, *Polk*, *Scott* and *Woodbury* (KMc, JN, MCK, JB, WMZ, TLu, GLV).

Eurasian Tree Sparrow: Three were in extreme NW *Cedar* on 16 Oct (SJD), and on 26 Oct, 56 were counted in rural *Muscatine* plus another 35 at Cone M *Louisa* (KMc).

COMMENT

This article was made possible by the collective contributions of 64 field observers whose initials appear in the text and whose names are listed below, plus another 12 whose full names are contained in the text. They contributed a total of 2054 records containing not just data, but also many supporting details, comments and photos which help properly frame the summary of events. The comments are especially helpful in understanding the data, separating species, clarifying circumstances, and sometimes just adding perspective. Here is a short sample—“about 10% were juveniles”; “appeared to be a family group”; “a 50/50 mix of males and females”; “swallowed a bullfrog”; “flushed while harvesting corn”; “did not have black axillars”; and “sedate and silent, tucked in foliage”.

These reports covered at least 307 distinct locations in Iowa from 75 of Iowa's 99 counties, although 60% of all reports came from just 10 heavily-birded counties. These counties, in order of greatest frequency, are Polk, Appanoose, Linn, Cerro Gordo, Johnson, Story, Woodbury, Marion, Marshall, and Winneshiek. The reports contributed to summarizing the presence of 260 species from August 1 to November 30. There were 21 other common species for which at least some data were contributed, but which are not included in this report.

This report also makes use of data collected and previously published elsewhere. Some of the sources of these data are U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) fall aerial surveys along the Mississippi River, USFWS waterfowl counts at DeSoto NWR, Iowa Department of Natural Resources August Roadside Surveys for game birds, and the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA).

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Hitchcock Nature Center Hawk Watch and Banding, Fall 2011

Mark Orsag

Fall 2011 was a season of contrasting extremes of raptor migration that eventually balanced out and produced what was, overall, an average season for the Hitchcock Nature Center Hawk Watch (HNCH). The season total for raptor species was 19, the long-term average for HNCH. In total, 11,044 southbound raptors were counted at HNCH, a figure just two percent below the nine year full coverage seasonal average. No new day records were set in 2011, and only two new seasonal records (for Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon) were established. Yet, only two (Northern Harrier and Ferruginous Hawk) of the nineteen more or less annual raptor species seen at Hitchcock posted average totals (within 5% of the long-term mean). Of the remaining seventeen species, eight posted totals 10–46% above average and nine posted counts 8–87% below average. The massive flooding of the Missouri River seems to have had little effect on the overall raptor migration other than a clearly different migration pattern for Bald Eagles (although the flooding apparently helped produce record counts for certain non-raptor migrants). The overall mild and static weather pattern in autumn 2011 clearly slowed down migration early at HNCH in August and September, but a mid- to late-season rebound erased much of what was an early season deficit. The overall pattern of raptor migration shifted slightly later into the season, something that seems to have been happening subtly at HNCH for several years.

THE SEASON IN DETAIL

August and September

Part-time counting during August occurred on 4 days between 14 and 30 August. Migration was typically slow, and a series of weak cold fronts with light north winds kept vulture numbers low. More notable was a solid start to the Broad-winged Hawk migration with 29 birds tallied during the month. Early September continued in a similar vein with relatively few days with strong winds (from any direction), frequent weak cold fronts, generally mild weather, and slow migratory movement for both raptors and non-raptors. There were few south wind days or stretches of days between fronts to channel raptors into the Loess Hills. The first triple digit day did not occur until 13 September, when a Turkey Vulture dominated flight of 217 raptors took place on a day characterized by light north winds following the passage of a weak Pacific cold front the night before. The month's best day occurred six days later on 19 September when a Broad-winged Hawk dominated flight of 324 raptors of 11 species took place. The rest of the month was characterized by a disappointing migratory pattern with daily totals ranging from between 64 to 216 raptors. The trend of mild weather and frequent weak fronts continued with little to concentrate the birds in the Loess Hills. September 2011 was the 2nd worst September in the history of Hitchcock Nature Center Hawk Watch.

October

Things took a sharp turn for the better beginning on 2 October. The next 17 days were an amazingly consistent drumbeat of triple digit raptor flights. The weather pattern became more favorable with some stronger, less frequent fronts and low pressure systems. Several days of fairly strong southerly winds often preceded the turn to northerly or westerly winds following the passage of the weather system. This is the sort of weather pattern that channels and funnels raptors through the Loess Hills and past Hitchcock. The Turkey Vulture flight got going in a very steady and impressive way. These big south-wind-loving raptors tacked through in huge numbers on 10 and 11 October and were joined by a mix of other species. On 10 October, the day's raptor total was 542, and the following day (11 October) 589 raptors were recorded with Turkey Vultures again dominating. A couple of days later, Red-tailed Hawks took over as the predominant species—they peaked on 18 October, dominating 2011's best flight of raptors (666). The overall flight trailed off sharply after 20 October, traditionally the end of the peak migration period at HNCH. Nevertheless, October 2011 had proven to be the second best October in the history of HNCH and had turned around what had looked like a very bad season at the end of September.

November and December

November 2011 was from a historical perspective at HNCH an average month. Fairly mild weather lingered and most of the month was very slow for raptors. There was, however, one truly exceptional day. On 9 November, Hitchcock counter Ryan Evans was joined on the tower by veteran raptor counters Elliott Bedows, Don Paseka, and Janis Paseka. They witnessed a rare "20/200 day" as 39 Bald Eagles and 212 Red-tailed Hawks were counted in a flight of 264 total raptors. December 2011 turned out to be the second best December in HNCH history; once again, this was the result of just two unusually big late season flights on 4 and 5 December (following the season's only substantial snowstorm on 3 December). Totals of 130 Bald Eagles and 59,000 Snow Geese dominated the flight on 4 December, and 72 Bald Eagles and 27 Red-tailed Hawks constituted the vast majority of the raptor push on 5 December. Both days were characterized by strong WNW winds and frigid temperatures, an uncharacteristic break from 2011's mild fall weather.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Turkey Vulture (4,126). This constituted the 2nd greatest season total for this species in the history of HNCH and was 19% above the 9-year average. Trends for the Turkey Vulture remained strong in 2011 despite a slow start in September. The strong peak flight of 419 occurred on 10 October. The last five were counted on 24 October. October was again the top month for Turkey Vultures at HNCH, continuing a recent shift away from the traditional late September peak.

Osprey (102). The unfavorable weather during the month of September affected the Osprey count at HNCH in 2011 with the total coming in fully 20% below average. The first Osprey appeared on 1 September, and the last was counted on 30 October. The very shallow peak flight of 9 occurred a bit early on 13 September. September was, as always, the best month.

Mississippi Kite (6). This total was 8% below average. Five of the six birds seen during the 2011 season were recorded between 2 and 5 September. The flight trailed off after

that with the last kite moving through on 25 September. Flights of 2 occurred on 2 and 4 September. All the sightings this season occurred during the month of September.

Bald Eagle (1,153). The 2011 season saw a flight that constituted a record total of Bald Eagles that was 23% above average and displayed a sharply divergent timeline for their passage. Both of these developments may have been due, in part, to the Missouri River flooding. The first two Bald Eagles were recorded on 21 August. The totals of 111 and 300 Bald Eagles for the months of September and October, respectively, were shockingly high for a traditionally late season migrant at HNCH. December was, however, the peak month, largely due to the impressive flight of 130 Bald Eagles on 4 December. In summary, the combination of the flooding and the mild fall produced a far more extended and even migration pattern than what we are used to experiencing for this species at Hitchcock.

Northern Harrier (295). Fall 2011 was an unremarkable season for Northern Harriers at HNCH with the total coming in at just 2% above the 9-year average. The first harrier was counted on 4 September with the last was recorded on 19 December. October was, as usual, the best month. The fairly strong peak flight of 43 occurred just a bit early on 13 October.

Sharp-shinned Hawk (878). Migrant Sharp-shins strongly reversed recent positive numbers and posted the second worst full coverage total in HNCH history (17% below average) in 2011. A September characterized by an unfavorable weather pattern seems to have been the root of the problem this year, as was indeed the case for other early-season migrants. October saw a rebound, but it was too little and too late. The first Sharp-shinned Hawk was recorded on 5 September. The weak peak flight of 64 occurred quite late on 13 October. October was again the

best month. Like the Turkey Vulture, the timing of the peak of the Sharp-shinned Hawk migration pattern appears to be shifting into early to mid- October and away from late September.

Cooper's Hawk (260). One of the few early season migrants that posted strong totals at HNCH in 2011, the season's total of Cooper's Hawks was 10% above average. The fairly strong peak flight of 24 was recorded with ordinary timing on 28 September. The last Cooper's Hawk was recorded on 27 November. September was, as always, the top month.

Northern Goshawk (7). In what was expected to be a great year for goshawks due to their cyclic patterns peaking, HNCH experienced merely a good one. The season's count was 17% above average. The first and peak of two both occurred on 9 October. October was the peak month. The last goshawk was counted on 25 November.

Red-shouldered Hawk (2). Recent negative trends for this HNCH rarity continued in 2011 with a full-coverage record low count (44% below average). One immature bird was seen working south on 19 August—this might have been a locally hatched bird, perhaps from Fontenelle Forest in Nebraska where this species is known to nest. An adult bird powered through low and right over counters' heads on 13 November, affording some spectacular looks at this striking raptor. These single-bird sightings widely spaced in the migration calendar are actually fairly typical of the Red-shouldered Hawk's migratory pattern at HNCH.

Broad-winged Hawk (805). This was a strong season for Broad-winged Hawk migration at HNCH that nonetheless demonstrated some atypical patterns. The overall season count was 18% above the 9-year HNCH full coverage average. An unusually high number of dark-morph individuals (8)

were recorded. The peak flight of 157 on 19 September was a bit early, but that was compensated by a flight of 146 with more typical timing on 23 September. The Broad-wing flight started unexpectedly strongly on 17 August with a flight of 15 birds. A remarkable late push in the 2nd week of October saw 40 recorded on 11 October and the last 36 seen on 12 October (during most seasons, the last Broad-wing is seen a week or more prior to this date). Overall, this species has displayed strongly positive trends at HNCH in recent years.

Swainson's Hawk (143). This total represented a record low HNCH count. Swainson's Hawk numbers at HNCH dropped sharply beginning in 2007. Since then, historically poor counts have become the norm. Between 2007 and 2011, the greatest annual count of Swainson's Hawks was 693 individuals. Between 2002 (a less than full coverage season) and 2006, the lowest annual count was 1,059 individuals. In 2011, for the first time at HNCH, no dark or rufous morph individuals were counted. The 2011 count was a whopping 87% below the 9-year full coverage average at HNCH. The first Swainson's Hawk appeared with fairly normal timing on 11 September. The last bird moved through on 14 October. The weak and very late peak flight of 48 occurred on 13 October. October was the best month. The prevailing theory at HNCH on this decline is that, with the generally more mild falls prevailing in recent years, the strong "Alberta Clipper" cold fronts that used to push the birds eastward and southward into western Iowa are no longer in evidence during the peak migratory window in late September and early October. More research is needed to confirm this theory, and the sharp decline of the species once considered to be Hitchcock's "signature" raptor has been a sad trend for veteran counters at HNCH.

Red-tailed Hawk (2,941). This total was 12% below average and represents the 2nd lowest total for Red-tailed Hawks in the full-coverage era that began at Hitchcock in 2003. The strong 2011 peak flight of 601, however, occurred with normal timing on 18 October. October was the peak month. The mild fall weather may have contributed to the lower totals of these mid-range migrants. Of the Red-tailed Hawks counted in 2011, counters identified 29 Harlan's dark morphs, 2 Harlan's light morphs, 7 Krider's, 7 intergrades (or intermediate morphs), 20 Western dark morphs, 1 Western rufous morph, and 33 indeterminate dark morphs. The very slow start to Red-tailed Hawk migration and some of the data from the HNCH banding station indicate that many of the Red-tailed Hawks that migrate southward past Hitchcock may have experienced poor reproductive success in 2011.

Rough-legged Hawk (23). The mild temperatures and lack of snow cover during November and December probably depressed the totals of this late season migrant. The 2011 count was 28% below the HNCH average. The shallow peak flight of three occurred with normal timing on 7 December. The first two Rough-legs of the autumn season were counted on 6 November. November was the peak month. Approximately 22% (5) of the 2011 flight was composed of dark-morph birds. This seems to indicate a more western Arctic composition to this season's flight than is normally the case at HNCH.

Ferruginous Hawk (1). This fall Loess Hills rarity fluctuates annually within a narrow 0 to 2 bird range at HNCH. The 2011 count was nearly exactly average for the site. This year's sighting occurred in the afternoon of 15 October. A lone bird was picked out of the tail end of a stream of high gliding Turkey Vultures that were over-flying the Loess Hills feature slightly north and west of the hawk

watch tower known as “the knoll.” The hawk was observed for several minutes as it powered south over the near valley and passed the vultures. Mark Orsag, Veronica Mecko, and Lisa King all saw the bird, a light-morph adult. This sighting was subsequently accepted by the Iowa Records Committee.

Golden Eagle (26). The 2011 flight was atypical in many ways. The season total was a robust 30% above the HNCH full-coverage average and was the 2nd greatest total for this species in the history of HNCH. The first Golden Eagle was recorded on 19 October and the last bird on 19 December. December was narrowly the peak month; this represents an unusually late migratory timing for Golden Eagles at Hitchcock. The peak flight, however, occurred on 23 October when four migrant Golden Eagles were logged by HNCH counters. The odd pattern of two-bird days for this species at HNCH that had prevailed over the course of previous seasons failed to manifest in 2011.

American Kestrel (85). Bad news about the kestrel has been consistent at HNCH, and 2011 was no exception. The pattern of decline, which has been apparent during the last decade, continued in 2011. The 2011 count was the 2nd worst in HNCH history (indeed far below the totals from many of the only partial coverage years prior to 2003), and was 31% below the 9-year full coverage average. This pattern of decline has been reflected at many hawk watches across North America. In 2011, the first kestrel (this species is apparently no longer a nesting bird in the Hitchcock vicinity) was recorded on 14 August and the last on 11 December. The peak flight of 11 occurred with normal timing on 13 September. September was, as usual, the best month.

Merlin (58). This was another strong year for Merlins at HNCH, with the season total logging in at 22% above average. As

usual, both the *columbarius* and *richardsonii* subspecies were seen. There was no true peak month as both September and October averaged just under a Merlin a day (28 each). The peak flight of 9 occurred on 12 October.

Peregrine Falcon (109). This total was a runaway new HNCH season record and 2011 was quite a remarkable year for Peregrines at HNCH. A shocking late push occurred between 10 and 12 October when 48 Peregrine Falcons were recorded over the 3-day span (including a peak flight of 19 on 11 October). The first was recorded a bit late on 12 September and the last bird of the season was recorded a bit early on 13 October. October was the peak month.

Prairie Falcon (3). This total was 17% below average. Single birds were recorded on 23 October, 9 November, and 25 November. This species is an annual and much anticipated rarity at Hitchcock during the autumn hawk watch. Some individuals speed by low (often to the east of the tower) while others dawdle past (often very close in to the counters) allowing some great looks!

NONRAPTOR FLIGHT

The 2011 season was a sub-par year overall for non-raptor migration at HNCH. There were, however, some impressive counts for certain species such as Double-crested Cormorants and American White Pelicans that were probably linked to the flooding of the Missouri River Valley that had peaked in June lingered into October. **Double-crested Cormorants** (15,779) posted a record count with a memorable peak flight of 5,000 on 13 October. A second HNCH record count was posted by the **American White Pelican** (17,685) with a peak flight of 5,090 on 16 September. Other totals were far more modest. Only 7 southbound **Great Blue Herons** were seen in autumn 2011, a very poor count. Similarly, only 105,720

Snow Geese (peak flight of 59,000 on 4 December) were recorded, far below average for a site that can log half to three quarters of a million individuals in a strong flight year. Strangely, no **Ross's Geese** were recorded—this may have been the result of an oversight on the part of our counters.

The count for **Franklin's Gulls** (7,307) was the best in several seasons but still well below HNCH historical averages. More than half of the Franklin's Gull flight occurred on 12 October (4,000). **Ring-billed Gulls** posted paltry totals for the second season in a row with only 26 counted. Twenty of those

pushed through on 9 November. **American Crows** (10,339) and **Blue Jays** (5,880) also posted totals that were well below average. Both corvid species also posted late shallow peak flights: 1,500 crows on 25 October and 503 jays on 2 October. **Eastern Kingbirds** continued to decline with only eight recorded in fall 2011. **Red-headed Woodpeckers** (373) continued a slow but steady rebound from a still unexplained crash decline in 2009 but still posted totals that were well below historic HNCH averages. The peak flight of 152, occurring with normal timing on 2 September, was a hopeful sign.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ryan Evans again served, with distinction, as Hawk Counter in 2011. We also are grateful to for the amazing efforts of our volunteers: Elliott Bedows, Dan Cassidy, Vern Cummins, Linda Dennis, John Donelson, Linda Donelson, Darrell Eich, Jerry von Ehwegen, Betty Grenon, Dianne Guinn, Candace Havelly, Colin Helgeson, Richard Hendrick, Jenny Jares, Kim Jares, Judy Kading, Lisa King, Clem Klaphake, Mary Kramer, Brian Lube, Don Maas, Shirley Maas, Mike Madsen, Jim Murdoch, Sue Mattix, Veronica Mecko, Jim Meyer, Greg Nelson, Mark Orsag, Babs Padelford, Loren Padelford, Don Paseka, Janis Pas-eka, Sandy Reinken, Maria Rundquist, Rex Rundquist, Joe Schaufenbuel, Lynn Schaufenbuel, Duane Schwery, Kathy Schwery, Jim Sinclair, Kent Skaggs, Greg Stemipen, Mark Swansiger, Sandy Swansiger, and last (but certainly not least)-- Jerry Toll who remains at the center of all the efforts, both in terms of banding and hawk counting that take place at Hitchcock every fall. Thanks again also to the wonderful Hitchcock Nature Center staff—Kelly Dix, Chad Graeve, Erin Kenney, Chad Kunze and Tina Popson—for all their help!

Raptor Banding at Hitchcock Hawk Watch, Fall 2011

Jerry Toll

RAPTOR BANDING EFFORTS

Diurnal banding commenced on 2 September and the first capture, a Red-tailed Hawk, occurred 4 September. However, banding efforts stagnated until 30 September when multiple captures occurred became the norm. During the slow late September period

there were eleven days with no captures. Most successful days were 1-2 captures with one exceptional day, 19 September, when there were 7 captures. Before 30 September, only 11 Red-tailed Hawks were captured, in contrast with last year's 49 captures by the same date. Juvenile Red-tailed Hawks are known to migrate south before breeding adults and most of our captures, particularly before 1 October, are juveniles. Thus, the low capture total in September 2011 suggests that the Red-tailed Hawks using HNCH may have experienced a poor reproductive season farther north. Feather samples were collected for deuterium isotope analysis of natal origins to compare to last year's findings. Overall, the proportion of after hatch year (AHY; adults) Red-tailed Hawk was higher than expected in 2011. In previous years the sample averaged about 22% AHY, but in 2011 it was 28% AHY birds. Diversity of species during September fared better with 3 species of falcons and a Broad-winged Hawk. Cooper's Hawk numbers were typical while Sharp-shinned Hawks were slightly below average.

October had more typical capture rates although Red-tailed Hawk numbers remained below average. Highlights were a slightly late capture of a second Peregrine Falcon on 12 October, a second Merlin on 14 October, and a Northern Goshawk on 18 October. The continuous banding season ceased on 31 October, but continued sporadically through November when flights were good and as time and weather allowed. During six attempts in November an additional 9 Red-tailed Hawks and 3 Sharp-shinned Hawks were added to the season total. We ended the season with 126 captures, slightly below last year's total of 157. Of this total, 80 were Red-tailed Hawks, of which 57 were juveniles. Other species totals included 20 Sharp-shinned Hawks (6 males and 14 females), 19 Cooper's Hawks (6 males, 11 females, 2 unknown), 1 male Northern Goshawk, 1 Broad-winged Hawk, 1 American Kestrel, 2 Merlin, and 2 Peregrine Falcons. Our efforts totaled 380 hours in 63 attempts, netting a capture rate of 0.33 birds per hour.

NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL BANDING ACTIVITIES

Northern Saw-whet Owl banding commenced on 10 October, a bit later than usual, but we did not have a single capture until 18 October despite six attempts. Once they started coming, they came strong. Between 19 October and 15 November we averaged almost 5 captures per night. This number is based upon new captures and all recaptures. During that peak period we had only one night where there were no captures; unfortunately, it was also the night of the public program when 47 people came to see the owls! On 31 October and 1 November, Sandy Reinken and Veronica Mecko banded 6 owls at Mount Ayr Wildlife Area in Ringgold County; they were trying to determine the feasibility of banding there next year. Migration dropped off rapidly after 15 November and the banding effort ceased on 29 November. In 2011, we totaled 72 new Saw-whets banded, 1 recapture of an owl banded by others (foreign), and 20 recaptures of owls banded by us during the same season but not in the same evening (domestic). Of this total, 76% were females, 14% were males, and 10% were of unknown gender. The nets were open for a total of 94 hours which, including the foreign recaptures, yielded a capture rate of 0.77 owls per hour. This was our best owl banding season to date.

Veronica Mecko was able to spend three weeks in October with us learning the banding processes that we use. She was a big asset to the programs. Having a third person meant

that there were always two banders available for coverage. One exciting aspect of the owl banding season is the educational opportunities it provides. Banding owls in a large room is conducive to exposing large groups to the process and gives people a chance to see the owls in hand. Diurnal banding education is limited to the size of the blind, allowing only a few people at a time. We had numerous visitors to the owl banding this year, creating some logistical problems but also making banding much more pleasant for the crew.

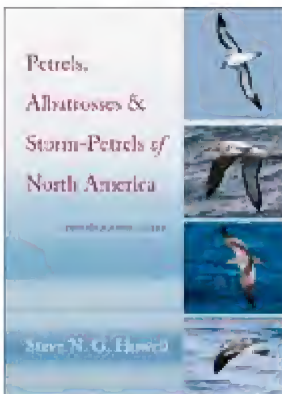
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The banding effort at Hitchcock nature Center could not be accomplished without the continuing financial support of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union, Pottawattamie County Conservation Board, and Iowa Audubon. We also thank this season's visitors to the banding station, including members of Kansas City Audubon and interns from the Missouri River Bird Observatory.

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Book Review

Stephen J. Dinsmore



Petrels, Albatrosses, and Storm-Petrels of North America by Steve N. G. Howell. 2012. 483 pp., color photographs, Princeton University Press, Princeton, ISBN 978-0-691-14211-1, \$45.00 (hard cover).

Many readers of *Iowa Bird Life*, including me, have been on pelagic birding trips off North Carolina, California, and elsewhere, hoping to glimpse seabirds that are not easily seen from land. I have long held a fascination for seabirds and pelagic birding, so it was with great anticipation that I looked forward to the publication of this book. *Petrels, Albatrosses, and Storm-Petrels of North America* provides perhaps the most thorough coverage of seventy species of tubenoses (Order Procellariiformes) that occur in North America, here defined as waters within 370 km of land from Alaska and Canada south to Panama and the Caribbean. This group includes only a fraction of what most of us consider seabirds, but tubenoses are argu-

ably the most diverse and among the most difficult to identify. Although this book is too large to qualify as a practical field guide, it should make an excellent reference guide for an upcoming pelagic birding trip in North America.

The book begins with a short section that outlines how to use the book and the format of the species accounts. This section includes a table with wingspan and body mass data for fifty-eight of the seventy species covered in the text. These data are arranged in logical groupings and provide a handy means of generally comparing the size and structure of these species. This table also provides a clue to some of the taxonomic challenges in this group with the introduction of some names that may be unfamiliar to all but the most serious seabirder (e.g., Scopoli's Shearwater).

For me, the Introduction was by far the most interesting section. This isn't because the species accounts weren't well written. Rather, this section contains a wealth of information about the tubenose group in general, a summary of ocean currents and how they are used by tubenoses, taxonomy, flight style, a detailed discussion of molts, and a summary of conservation issues. There is a short section on external topography that is well illustrated by photographs. I found the section on flight manner especially interesting, and agree with the author that this is a distinctive feature of the group as a whole and a useful aid for field identification. Howell includes several diagrams and text discussing how the flight manner can change rather dramatically within a species simply in response to wind conditions. The section on taxonomy also hints at some of the challenges of recognizing species within this group. The Band-rumped Storm-Petrel is mentioned as an example of species that may comprise as many as *ten* species worldwide, many recognized at sea away from their breeding colonies by subtleties of size and structure! A short section on environmental factors discusses some of the important sources of variation in the birds' appearance that can effect field identification—feather bleaching, discoloration of feathers (e.g., from an oil spill), and the influence of a range of light conditions and distance. The section on molt is a must read. The author includes several diagrams illustrating molt patterns for Northern and Southern Hemisphere tubenoses and points out that molt can provide important clues for the field identification of some species at sea. All told, the Introduction was a very fascinating read!

The species accounts include text describing each species' size (measures of overall length, wingspan, and tail length are included here), their status and distribution, and a summary of field identification that discusses similar species, habitat and behavior, and a detailed description of the bird with any age differences noted and a summary of molt patterns. Most accounts include one or more pages of excellent photos showing details of appearance, molt, and geographic variation. Most accounts include a map illustrating the known at-sea range of each species, arrows indicating general movement patterns, and numbers (e.g., 6-7 for June and July) that indicate approximate seasonal occurrence within the shown range. I really like the maps! But keep in mind that the maps only illustrate the range within the area covered by the book—many species also occur in other regions of the world.

The photographs are well done and exhaustive and depict most species at rest on the water and in flight, illustrate molt patterns and subspecific variation, and, for a few species, even make use of extensive museum collections. The photos are sharp and show each species in a variety of poses to illustrate subtle features such as shape and coloration. The collection of photos amassed for each species is definitely one of the major strengths of this book!

The text closes with a short list of abbreviations used in the text, brief mention of recently extinct and hypothetical species, and complete list of references cited in the text. Readers of *Iowa Bird Life* that are considering a future pelagic birding trip off North America should seriously think about adding this book to their reference library—I would consider it required reading!

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Fifty Years Ago in *Iowa Bird Life*

James J. Dinsmore

A quick glance at the cover of the first issue of 1962 shows that something is different. The cover painting of an American Goldfinch that was used during 1961 has been replaced with one of a Rough-legged Hawk in flight. Editor Petersen continued this pattern throughout his 25 years as editor, using a different cover painting each year. The lead article by Milton Weller describes a program designed to collect data on nesting birds. He provides an example of a data card that could be used to record data on the contents of a nest along with a discussion of how to describe the nest site and the vegetation around it. I don't know whether any studies resulted from this program.

Much of the rest of the issue is Woodward Brown's summary of the results of the 1961 Christmas Bird Count. The 26 CBCs held in Iowa found 96 species, only slightly below the all-time high of 98 found in 1958. Among the more interesting finds were Bohemian Waxwings on three counts and Evening Grosbeaks on 12 counts. Bald Eagles continued to increase with 168 this year compared with 116 in 1960. Twelve species of waterfowl (but no Canada Geese) were found, mostly on counts along the Mississippi River. Davenport had the most species with 70. Among the participants were several who are still active in Iowa: Larry Dau, Darwin Koenig, Bob Nickolson, and Dean Roosa.

The field reports included a number of additional reports of Bohemian Waxwings and Evening Grosbeaks that provide further details on that winter's invasion of those species. Among the short notes, one by William Youngworth tells of finding a single Greater Prairie-Chicken in downtown Sioux City. It was his first sighting of that species in the area since 1935, and he comments that the migrations that used to bring them into Iowa in fall seem to be a thing of the past.

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Above, Black-throated Green Warbler, Iowa City, Johnson, 11 September 2011. Photograph by Jim Scheib, Iowa City, IA.



Left, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Des Moines, Polk, 29 August 2011. Photograph by Richard S. Wacha, Des Moines, IA.



Horned Lark, Scott, 5 September 2011. Photograph by Paul O. Roisen, Sioux City, IA.



Least Flycatcher, Boone, 28 August 2011. Photograph by Larry Dau, Boone, IA.



*Above, Yellow-throated Vireo,
Boone, 27 August 2011.
Photograph by Larry Dau,
Boone, IA.*



*Left, Northern Cardinal,
Polk, 7 November 2011.
Photograph by Paul O.
Roisen, Sioux City, IA.*

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES (renewable yearly): Fledgling (students) \$15, Institutional \$45, Foreign \$35, Goldfinch \$30, Bluebird \$35, Oriole \$50, Egret \$75, Osprey \$100, Bald Eagle \$250, and Peregrine Falcon \$500+. Membership dues entitle members to receive *Iowa Bird Life* and *IOU News* quarterly and to vote and hold office in the Union. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Join, give a gift, or manage your membership on-line at <www.iowabirds.org>. Paper forms for new members and renewals may be mailed to the treasurer (see inside front cover). Back issues of *Iowa Bird Life* are available from Membership Coordinator Pam Allen, 7955 Wistful Vista Dr., #20, West Des Moines, IA 50266 (2birders@hickorytech.net).

INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS: Original manuscripts, notes, letters (indicate if for publication), editorials, and other material relating to birds in Iowa should be sent by e-mail attachment in Microsoft Word to editor. Research manuscripts should include abstract, introduction, study area, methods, results, discussion, and literature cited sections and will be sent for peer review. Accepted manuscripts will be published promptly depending on space available.

Photos and graphics: Submit only original, unsized, and unenhanced photos in your camera's JPEG (*.jpg) format. Photos must be 300 dpi at the size they will be printed (6-1/2" wide by 6-1/2" high for the cover and various smaller sizes inside), so setting your camera to its highest possible resolution is recommended. The editor will do any resizing and enhancing required because any previous adjustments to the photos may make them unusable. Submit photos and graphics as e-mail attachments.

E-mail all material other than seasonal reports to editor at cootjr@iastate.edu. Deadlines for submission are **January 1 for winter issue** (Vol. xx[1]), **April 1 for spring issue** [2], **July 1 for summer issue** [3], **October 1 for fall issue** [4]. Send seasonal field reports to field reports editors by deadlines listed on inside front cover.

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CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT: Deadline for receipt of reports is 15 January. For forms and instructions, contact Christopher J. Caster, 4 South Ridge Ct., Coralville, IA 52241 (cjcaster@earthlink.net).

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UPCOMING MEETINGS OF THE IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION: Fall: 24–26 August 2012, Marshalltown.

FRONT COVER PHOTO: Swamp Sparrow, Woodbury, 15 October 2011. Photograph by Paul O. Roisen, Sioux City, IA.

BACK COVER PHOTO: Red-eyed Vireo, Boone, 29 August 2011. Photograph by Larry Dau, Boone, IA.

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